ALL-STORY

COMBINED WITH MUNSEY

Love Stories of the American Girl

Nov. 29

20 cent
Canada 25

A Legacy of Hate

Digitized by Google
NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

Now you can give a worth-while

Xmas Gift

$1.00 Brings Your Choice

10 MONTHS TO PAY

WHAT YOU DO—Send $1.00 with name, address and number of article desired. Simply state: (1) How long at address, (2) Age, (3) Married or single, (4) Name of employer, (5) Nature of work, (6) How long employed. All information held strictly confidential. No direct inquiries sent to employer.

WHAT WE DO—On arrival of your order, we open a 10-Month Charge Account and send your choice for approval and 15-day trial. Convince yourself of value offered. If satisfied, pay balance in ten equal monthly payments. Otherwise return and your $1.00 will be promptly refunded.

No articles sold to persons under 20

17 JEWEL BULOVA

$39.50

99—Diamond on each side of large AA1 diamond in 18K white gold ring for ladies. **$1.00 with order; $3.85 a month.**

$42.50

94—17 Jewel BULOVA watch for men at low price. Latest style band; radium dial. **$1.00 with order; $4.15 a mo.**

$29.50

96—Ladies ring 18K white gold; AA1 diamond. **$1. with ord.; $2.85 a mo.**

$29.75

95—Regular $35 KENT watch for ladies with 15 Jewel movement in 14K solid white gold case; expansion bracelet. **$1.00 with order; $2.98 a month.**

$67.50

75—New square prong ring for ladies; 18K white gold with diamond and sapphire on each side of large diamond in center. **$1 with order; pay Postman $5 $6.15 a mo.**

The KENT Gift Combination

$39.50

79—Ladies' KENT watch with two diamonds and four sapphires in carved case, 15 Jewel movement; expansion bracelet with four sapphires. Complete in gift box with silk grosgrain ribbon. **$1 with order; $3.85 a mo.**

$100

97—The modern trend in engagement rings carved in 18K white gold with artistic arrangement of nine AA1 diamonds. **Send $1; pay Postman $9.00; balance $9.00 a month.**

$29.50

88—Modern wedding ring at low price. Seven AA1 diamonds in seamless band of 18K white gold. **$1. with order; $2.85 a month.**

$50

100—Dinner ring of artistic design in 18K white gold and a beautiful arrangement of seven AA1 quality diamonds. **$1 with order; $4.90 a month.**

Three Gift Suggestions —specially priced

$52.50

74—A new engagement ring designed in the modern manner carved in 18K white gold with an artistic "step" arrangement of seven AA1 diamonds. **$1.00 with order; $5.15 a month.**

$29.75 The KENT

28—The KENT is DUST-PROOF, JOLT-PROOF, and INSURED. Guaranteed 15 Jewel movement in thin model engraved case. Complete with the woven band. Radium dial. **$1.00 with order; $2.88 a month.**

78—It's the famous BULOVA watch for ladies with beautifully carved case set with two diamonds and four blue sapphires. 15 Jewel guaranteed Bulova movement. Complete in attractive gift case with expansion bracelet set with sapphires; also black silk grosgrain ribbon. **$1.00 with order; $4.88 a month.**

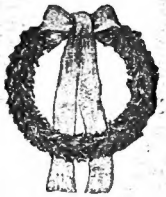
FREE to any Adult

—post card will bring this Complete Jewelry book with large assortment of gift suggestions.

L.W. SWEET Inc.

DEPT. 2250-S 1670 BROADWAY NEW YORK

Digitized by Google



A Splendid Idea!

Just the Gift for Ruth or Mother or any other Girl— Be She 16 or 60

A subscription to this popular love story magazine will not only be a constant reminder of your thoughtfulness but a gift that will be welcomed again and again throughout the year. Save shopping tours. Give subscriptions to

ALL-STORY

COMBINED WITH MUNSEY

Love Stories of the American Girl

ALL-STORY contains thrilling stories of love and romance, as well as many interesting and helpful departments. A subscription to ALL-STORY is not only a desirable gift for the individual but for the whole family as well.

DON'T let your Christmas gifts be of the sort that soon pass from usefulness. Make your gift one that will come to the recipient in the long winter evenings and in the cool of the summer nights.

Fill out the attached coupon, mail it to us with your remittance and lighten your Christmas shopping burdens.

We will send the first issue of ALL-STORY, together with a Christmas greeting card announcing that the gift will come from you for an entire year.

The cost is but $4.00 ($7.00 in Canada). Fill out the coupon and your shopping worries are over. *Send it now.*

ALL-STORY, 280 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

Inclosed is $4.00 (Canada $7.00). Please send ALL-STORY for one year with Christmas Greeting card to:

Name.....

Address.....

City.....*State*.....

Acknowledge order to:

Name.....

Address.....

City.....*State*.....

ALL-STORY

Combined with MUNSEY

Volume VIII—No. 3 *Love Stories of the American Girl* November 29, 1930

Novelette and Short Stories:

Sandra Gives Thanks ..... Jane Littell 352

Midnight Madness ..... I. Baird Richards 366

Cupid on the Gridiron ..... Faith Morrow 381

The Street of Closed Doors ..... Una Bunker 392

His Great Love ..... C. M. Ware 439

Red Gingham Hearts ..... Daisy Dean 448

Serials:

A Legacy of Hate (In Two Parts—Part I) ..... Betty Trevor 323

An Offer of Marriage (In Three Parts—Part III) ..... Berta Ruck 406

Features:

Planets of Destiny ..... Carol Young 461

Handwriting and Happiness ..... John Fraser 465

Heart-to-Heart ..... Agnes Merion Morton 469

The Lonesome Club ..... Dorothea Dale 475

The next issue of ALL-STORY on the stands December 10

THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY - 280 BROADWAY, NEW YORK

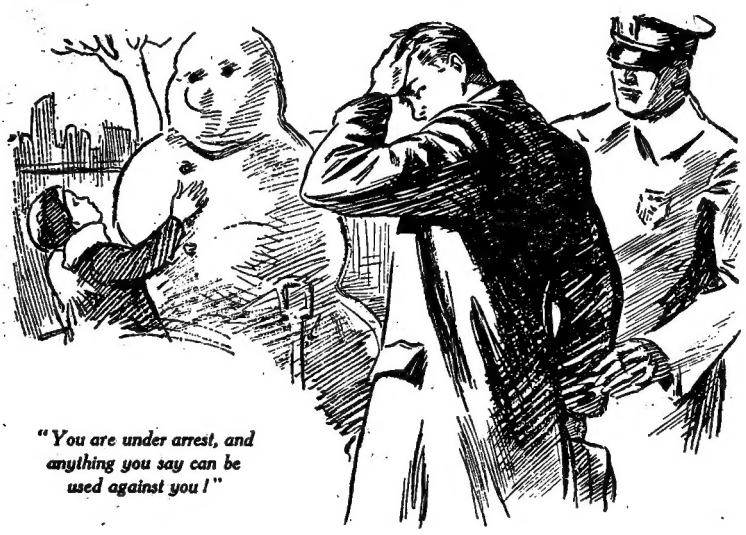
WILLIAM T. DEWART, President — C. T. DIXON, Vice-President

MESSAGERIES HACHETTE
3, La Belle Sauvage, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C.4

PARIS: HACHETTE & CIE.
111 Rue Réaumur

Published every other Wednesday and copyright, 1930, by The Frank A. Munsey Company. Single copies, 20 cents. By the year, $4.00 in United States, its dependencies, Mexico, and Cuba; $7.00 to Canada and Foreign Countries. Remittances should be made by check, express money order or postal money order. Currency should not be sent unless registered. Entered as Second Class Matter November 28, 1896, at the post office at New York, under the Act of March 3, 1879. The entire contents of this magazine are protected by copyright, and must not be reprinted without the publishers' permission. Title registered in U. S. Patent Office. Copyrighted in Great Britain.

Manuscripts submitted to this Magazine should be accompanied by sufficient postage for their return if found unavailable. The publisher can accept no responsibility for return of unsolicited manuscripts.



"You are under arrest, and anything you say can be used against you!"

A Legacy of Hate

By BETTY TREVOR

CHAPTER I

THE WIFE

SERENA MANNING lay very still, so still she scarcely seemed to breathe.

At the window Dale stood, uneasy, troubled. This silent mood of his wife's always made him feel on edge. Why didn't she speak? Say something? Anything!

When he had come in from his ride just now he knew she was suffering, knew the cause. That early morning gallop of his over the marshes, the wind beating in his face, the sea shimmering, luminous alongside — she envied him. She had loved life so much! It was as though she hated him for enjoying it still, when she would never ride again!

If she would only realize that he was human. How could he stifle the life in him? But she always made him feel guilty, so that he shrank from coming in. Once more pity flooded him. How she had always taken life at a gallop! How terrible to lie there, if knowing the great outside world went on the same!

"May I come in?" said a childish voice at the door.

Instantly the cloud departed from Dale's face, for that was the voice of little Julian—called, though no one knew why, Jumbo.

"Of course you may; only be quiet."

Jumbo tiptoed in, his dear little face sorrowful. His father sighed. Life was shadowed for him, too, and yet only two years ago Dale Manning had had everything good life could offer him. He was wealthy, young, had a lovely wife, a son, and then everything went smash!

That day when Serena had taken out his racing car against his wishes; he had told her emphatically that he did not wish her to take that particular car out, for she was likely to lose her head when driving. Why had she disregarded him? Sometimes he had thought she was jealous of his affection for the great car. Poor Serena! She had paid dearly, for there had been a smash-up, and from that day she had never been able to walk. Two years! Living like a log! Serena, who had loved life so!

Jumbo's voice broke in on his thoughts.

"Can I speak to mummy?"

He was blinking like a little owl in the darkened room, but he did not advance toward the bed. He loved his mother, but there was a hint of fear in his love. Dale looked at his wife anxiously. Her white face showed no sign that she knew the child was there.

"It's one of mummy's bad days!" he said. "Better go and let nurse take you for a walk, where your noise won't disturb her."

"May I kiss her good morning, daddy?"

"Better not!"

The boy stole out, and Dale resumed his moody scrutiny of the landscape.

He wondered what thoughts were going on behind Serena's white face. What turmoil, what ferment! There were days when she quarreled with him so violently that he wished he could end it all, one way or another. It wouldn't have been so bad if she kept Jumbo out of it, but she had a terrible way of appealing to the child.

"It's mummy you love best, Jumbo! Poor mummy, who has nothing but you!"

And he, agonizing for the boy to say the right thing, could only say:

"Of course, it's mummy you love best!"

But Serena would not let him arrange matters.

"I want it to be what he really feels, not what you tell him to say."

And Jumbo would stand there, his little face twisted, struggling between loyalty to his father and desire to please his mother. For Jumbo loved both parents, but his father most, jolly dad, who was pal and companion, father and mother, all combined!

The little boy was so frightened when they quarreled. Always Dale determined not to let her speeches get below his guard, but she seemed to glory in her power to whip him to bitter retorts. When he had only pity for her—she did not want pity, though.

She would taunt him with the fact that while she lay there he could go out and enjoy his life, never thinking of her! She would goad him until he flashed out, and then Jumbo would put his tiny hands up to his ears. Yet she loved them both.

In the ordinary way Dale would stay in her room for the rest of the morning, picking up a book and reading, or going over the accounts of the estate, finding some kind of occupation. To-day a strange nausea swept him. He wanted to be outdoors with

his son. He could not endure the silence, the baffling, quiet woman, who, though she said nothing, was as wide awake as he.

Suddenly he turned and went out of the room, and shut the door.

EVEN as he was outside he heard her voice.

"Dale!"

For a moment he resisted the impulse to return. It wasn't his fault that it was a glorious spring morning, the sun shining, the blackthorn a white drift across the hedge. He couldn't go back.

"Dale, I want you, I want you!"

He went slowly back, and paused inside the door.

"Why did you leave me?" she said, and the bright, feverish eyes scanned his face.

"I thought you were asleep!" he answered.

"You knew I wasn't! You want to show I'm nothing to you any more. A dead husk of a woman!"

He did not speak; he would not speak. She should not make him speak.

"You meant to leave me here, to lie all day thinking of you out in the sunshine!" Again she shot him a dark look. He went to the window and drew back the curtains. The sun streamed in, gold and mellow, and wholesome.

"And now," she said in a harsh whisper, "you do that to drive me mad, knowing what there is out there. Knowing that I'm doomed to this!"

He pulled the curtains to again.

"You are my wife and I love you. There is nothing that I would not do to help you!"

"You wish me dead!"

"I do not!" he answered.

"I'm dead to you!"

"You're not dead, and Dr. Graham says that you have a good many years in front of you. Why can't you be sensible? You know I've done all I can for you. I go nowhere, and I stay here for hours at a time!"

"But you're wearying of it!" said Serena, in a dull voice, which seemed remote from earth.

"I'm not wearying of it, but I'm only twenty-nine. I've got my life to live. A man would go mad always in a sick room. Dr. Graham says you could do more than you do, if you'd only take an interest in life. It's so bad for you to shut yourself away here; you won't see any one. Even Jumbo! Why won't you see people? There's Dr. Graham's daughter—she asked me to-day if she could come and call. She's young and bright. There are a dozen who would be glad to while away a dreary hour for you, but you refuse to see them all."

"To have them pity me! To have them look at me, and to know what they are thinking! 'Poor thing, she's dead. She can never feel again!'"

"They wouldn't!" Dale reproached her. "They might be sorry that you can't ride or dance as you used to do, but they wouldn't pity you like that!"

"This Alison Graham," said Serena thoughtfully. "I saw her last two years ago. What is she like now?"

"A nice-looking girl, lots of russet-brown hair, short and curly; she and Jumbo have a fine time together. She takes him out on nurse's day off."

"Perhaps I've been foolish to stay shut in so long!" said Serena. "Perhaps I'll see a few people. I'll begin with Alison Graham."

"Why, that's splendid!" said Dale in delight. "I'm sure if you'd only come out of your shell you'd find there are lots of things you could do! Dr. Graham wanted me to carry you out

in the garden, and I'll insist on it when summer comes!"

He bent and kissed her, then went out of the room, a new spring in his step. Some of the shadow had lifted. Her eyes followed him until the door was shut, and then they still stared as though they saw him go out into the garden, stop to look at the crocuses, whistle his dog, then go for a brisk walk.

She went with him in imagination to the very door of Dr. Graham's house. She saw Alison come—saw them laugh and talk together, while she, Serena, lay eternally shut out from laughter—

The maid came in and rearranged the curtains.

"I'm going to have a visitor!" Serena said. "Dr. Graham's daughter, Alison!"

Anna looked up in astonishment.

She was a prim-looking creature, and had a history, and Serena knew it. Anna had told her that she was a widow, with a boy whom she was educating to be a gentleman. Anna was ambitious for that boy; she was a cold woman on every other point, just as Serena was a cold woman on all points but one. The maid loved her son; the mistress loved her husband, with a deep, abiding, devastating passion that had been her undoing. She had meant to smash the car because Dale adored it. She had been jealous of that car! And in the end she had only smashed herself. The car, swift and lithe and lovely, like a sentient thing, and she had hated it, and she had tried to smash it, and it had given her life in death!

Anna moved about silently. If she pitied Mrs. Manning she never let it appear. Watching her, Serena wondered if she only thought of that boy! Anna wanted money for him.

Did it mean that she would do anything for money? Or had she scruples?

Her thoughts stopped short.

The door had opened; Alison Graham stood there.

THE newcomer was exquisite. Serena took that in after one long, scrutinizing look. Russet curls and velvet eyes, brown, golden brown; tiny freckles, adorable sunkisses, and an air of youthful vitality about her that was almost affronting.

"Come in!" said Anna grudgingly.

"Thank you so much. Oh, Mrs. Manning, I'm so glad you've let me come!"

"It was kind of you to trouble about a bedridden creature." Serena's voice was low and husky; she seemed to have to make an effort to talk.

Alison crossed the soft gray Aubusson carpet and dropped into a chair.

The last time she had seen Mrs. Manning had been a few months before the accident, when the girl was home from school. Serena had been a sophisticated vision, to the seventeen-year-old flapper. Lovely, slim and willowy as a young sapling, with eyes that were a translucent blue; the fair golden hair was a silk net; she was perfect in every little detail; scented, tailored, correct!

Alison had felt awkward and tomboyish beside her, too conscious of her hands and feet.

After school she had gone through a course of training so that when she came home to live with her father she could help him in his practice. It was two years before she returned, and then she heard that Serena Manning had cut herself off from the world. Poor thing! Alison could remember how her heart had ached, and how reproach-

ful she had been when her father had said:

"I'm sorry for Mrs. Manning, but ten times sorrier for Dale"

She had expostulated with him and he went on:

"It's bad enough to be tied to your bed, I agree, but Mrs. Manning isn't playing fair. She's making Dale pay, just as though it was his fault. She's not seen a soul since the accident, except that thin-faced maid of hers, and she grudges him every free breath he draws. Yes, the person I'm really sorry for is that poor fellow!"

Alison and Dale had been friends from the start. She had always liked him, but they had had few opportunities of getting to know each other until now. And as for Jumbo—well, she simply adored Jumbo!

Coming into that quiet was like stepping from the outside world into a vault. The room was heated and yet it struck a chill to her heart! And the woman lying there did not bear any resemblance to the old Serena. Alison stifled an exclamation; there was a weird, almost sinister beauty about the dead-white face, with the well-marked brows, the pale gold hair lying close and tight on her head. It was a deathly beauty, almost like looking at a death mask.

"So you have come to see me," said Serena. "That was good of you!"

"I'd have come before if you'd only let me, Mrs. Manning!" answered the girl.

"But why should I shadow your life with my trouble?"

"People would like to come and see you. I know I'm glad that you let me come up."

"You are often here at the house?"

"Yes, I teach Jumbo for a couple of hours every morning."

The woman on the bed stirred. Dale hadn't mentioned that!

"Tell me about the outside world. Is the sun shining out there? Are the bulbs coming out? The daffodils? It used to be a sheet of yellow in the garden, as if God had lit one and the rest had caught fire. I remember that last spring, seeing it, and thinking, one could die after seeing that."

"Yes, I know!" said Alison softly.

"Are they out now?" said Serena.

"It is too early for that yet, but the blackthorn is white on the hedges!"

"And Jumbo, why is he so quiet? Up here he stands so still. Why doesn't he laugh and jump and shout at the top of his voice?"

The tears stung Alison's eyelids. "He is a normal little boy out there."

"Out there—I see!" She closed her eyes, then opened them again.

"And my husband! What does he do out there alone?"

"He misses you. What man wouldn't! He's always talking of you."

"If he were you wouldn't remark on it," the sick woman said bitterly. "He remembers me I suppose—sometimes!"

"Always!" said Alison earnestly. "it's always—'Serena loved this part of the garden, so I don't let the gardeners alter anything. She planted violets here; she wanted an Italian garden, and I want it finished before summer, so that I can carry her out to see it!'"

Serena smiled a faintly ironical smile, and the girl felt troubled. Didn't she believe her?

"Tell me about my boy! Tell me about Jumbo," she went on.

"He's a dear little boy, so bright and brave. He's getting on beautifully with his lessons."

"You like to come here?"

"Very much! Jumbo is such a dear, and so quick at his music."

"How charming of you!" said Serena Manning. "And Dale, does he like the music, too? He listens to your playing, I suppose?"

"I don't know," the girl replied. "He's never there, you see. He is in here always when I play."

"You think that it is hard for him?"

"Oh, no!" said Alison uncomfortably, conscious of the strange fire in those burning eyes. Serena's fingers had secretly pressed the bell-push, so that Anna entered here.

"Miss Graham ought to go now!" said the maid.

"But you must come again," said Serena.

After that Alison was often allowed in the invalid's room. Dale was delighted.

"You're doing her good," he told Alison.

That pleased her very much, but she did not tell him how his wife questioned her incessantly about his doings.

Then one day Serena asked her a favor. Alison had been explaining that her father was away for the night, but that she always helped him to dispense his medicines, so she must go early.

"The sleeping powders! Can you make those up?" questioned Serena eagerly.

"Yes, I made the last few up for you," said the girl, with evident pride. "I'm fully qualified, you know."

"Then be a dear and bring me a fresh lot to-night! I'm out of them, and I dread the night without them."

"I'll bring them at once."

"To-night?" said Serena. "Will you really?"

Alison nodded, and departed.

For a moment the maid and mistress looked at each other, and then Serena Manning spoke, and Anna listened intently, and swore by a solemn oath to obey instructions to the letter.

CHAPTER II

THE WATCHER

DALE coming out of his son's room, having settled the boy for bed, was surprised to see Alison coming softly up the stairs.

"I've brought Mrs. Manning her sleeping powders. I promised I would."

"Poor Serena!" said Dale with a sigh. "She didn't tell me she was sleeping badly."

At that moment Anna came out of the sickroom.

"She's resting now," said the maid. "I'll take the powders."

Alison felt depressed, thinking pitifully of the silent figure behind the door! The desolation of the big house! Everything about it made her want to cry! Jumbo was such a pathetic little boy and Dale, too, so powerless to help, so miserable!

The man stood quiet for a moment. Then he turned to Alison.

"But you're not going back alone. It's pitch dark!"

"I've got my bicycle. I'll be all right."

But he was walking beside her resolutely.

"Do you think I'm going to let you go back alone?"

"But I tell you I've got my bicycle!" she repeated.

"And I tell you I'm coming!"

That walk back was not hurried; he wheeled her machine, and they talked as they went.

The girl realized that she had not been quite truthful when she had told Mrs. Manning that Dale had not heard her play, for suddenly he said:

"I've heard you playing to Jumbo! You don't know what your music means to me. It's just as though out of a dark sky there suddenly comes a rainbow. My life has been full of darkness lately. I must express my appreciation to you, Alison!"

"I shouldn't have dared to play if I'd known you were listening," she said shyly.

"You would! You wouldn't mind my hearing a little of your lightheartedness! Jumbo and I are alike in our love of music. Do you know the piano hasn't been touched since Serena's accident? But even then her music was not like yours. There was always a throb of unrest in it, something unsatisfied."

"Poor Mrs. Manning!" said Alison. "I know what you mean, because when I was just a kid I remember thinking how lovely she was, but it was as if she asked too much of life, as if it didn't give her all she craved for!"

It was too dark for her to see his surprised look, but how accurately she had put her fingers upon Serena's nature. The truth was, he had never given her the love she demanded, yet how attracted he had been by her at first. They had met at a dance; she was lovely, and he had been fascinated by her, he had thought her a delicate, fragile thing of sweetness and light, mirth and laughter. But awakening had come. Serena was not the lighthearted dancing creature she had appeared. Deep below the surface there had been a great hunger, a great demand. Love didn't satisfy her—at least his love didn't.

"You don't love me as you did when we were married!" she said it now, as she had said it then, too often.

"Love could not keep such a white-hot flame!" he told her.

"Why not? Why not? We're together for always now. Sometimes you go out and do things without me!"

"But, darling, I know we can always be together." Adding: "Of course I always want you with me!"

But he didn't! She was too exacting; she demanded too much.

Fiercely, wildly, tempestuously she loved him; her love was always white-hot, while he had quickly settled down to the normal everyday life of an American business man.

Since the smash he had given up his business, his friends, everything to stay with her.

HE turned from the dreary treadmill of his thoughts to Alison.

It was good to be walking with her; she was so genuine, so wholesome, and he loved the fresh, sweet look of her. He was amazed when they got home so soon.

"Good night!" she said shyly, and left him. He wished they could have talked more; she soothed him inexpressibly.

He did not know when he quietly let himself in, that Serena knew in that strange, uncanny way of hers that he had been two hours going that two miles to where Alison Graham lived.

After that the girl and the man became chums. Dale joined jolly picnics in the woods as the weather grew warmer. Jumbo loved picnics. On Jumbo's birthday they were to go to the woods first, and afterward to visit the fair which was being held for three days at the near-by town.

That day Dale was exceedingly happy. He had seen his wife, and she had seemed more reasonable than usual. She had urged him to go out and have a good time.

A whole wonderful day to himself!

He went off as happy as Jumbo, laden with dainties from the kitchen.

Alison's present to the little boy was a gayly painted trowel and spade, and he insisted on digging up some roots of primroses to plant in "mother's garden." The two grown-ups helped. The fair, too, was great fun. Alison enjoyed the merry-go-round as much as Jumbo did, and Dale was happy in their pleasure.

Going back in the car, Jumbo fell asleep in Alison's arms. Looking at them, Dale felt a twinge of pain.

He stopped the car, lifted the boy out and put him on the back seat.

"He's too big for you. You look tired!" he said in excuse. But she wasn't tired, only wonderfully, radiantly happy—why, she did not know.

They were nearly home when the car went wrong, the reliable, dependable Lincoln! Dale stopped and got out, Alison, too. A blow-out.

"I always help father when he has a flat. Let me help now!"

Between them they got the tire off and the spare on.

"It was fun helping," she said artlessly.

"You like to help every one, don't you, Alison?"

"I like doing things," she admitted. "Dad says I'm cutting him out in his practice." She laughed at the idea.

She got up on the step, but a drizzle of rain had made it slippery, and she slipped. The next moment she was in his arms.

He loved her! No passion here! No wild thrill! Just a sense of peace, almost as though a child had reached its mother's breast.

His lips crushed down on hers, and innocent Alison, who had never known what love was until then, yielded to his caress. Then she broke away.

"Oh, Dale! To think we've done that! To think we've been so wicked!" she almost sobbed.

"Not wicked!" he said. "We couldn't help it, Alison. I didn't know I loved you, but I ought to have seen."

"We mustn't see any more of each other!" she whispered. She was trembling violently. At nineteen one doesn't realize how swiftly love can come, how it can sweep like a torrential storm through one's being. But she did see that now she knew she loved him she must not see him again. Why, already she was longing for him to enfold her again. She wanted to feel the strong pressure of his arms, feel his heart beat, and his lips on hers. She was alarmed at the emotion that raced through her.

She loved Dale Manning—and he was married to a woman who was tied to her bed. The pitifulness and the hopelessness of it came home to her, and tears sprang to her eyes, and trickled down, and one fell on his hand. He looked down at it in the glow of the headlights. Already she was weeping! How many tears would she shed before they came to peace, they two? If they ever came to peace.

"We must never see each other again. I mustn't come and teach Jumbo any more. It's not right, when she's so ill. Dale, I care—terribly—but I won't deliberately walk into temptation!"

She was right, and he knew that she was right.

He got into the car and started it, and they came back to the little village like a flash. He dropped her at the doctor's without looking at her.

"Good-by!" she said hastily.

"Good-by!" he answered, and the car was gone.

He took it into the garage, and lifted

Jumbo out. He carried him up to where nurse awaited him.

"It's very late, sir," said nurse reproachfully. "Mrs. Manning sent in twice to know if you'd brought him back. It's ten o'clock!"

"Oh, Dale, we mustn't," she said. "We can never see each other again"

"As late as that?" said Dale. "Well, it's his birthday. I wanted to give the little chap a treat. He enjoyed the merry-go-round."

He hesitated when he came out of Jumbo's room; always he went in to see Serena last thing, but to-night a feeling of intense misery swept through him. It seemed as if he could not force himself into that darkened room, with Serena lying there—hear her reproaches, or, worse still, endure her bitter silence! Yes, Alison was right. She would have to leave the place and get work somewhere else! What a fiendish muddle! If only he hadn't lost control of himself! But for that they might have gone on for years without saying anything!

He turned to his own room. He had never been away from Serena a whole day like this, and he ought to go to her, but he couldn't!

But early in the morning he waked, feeling guilty. He rose and went for a ride, trying to wear down his un-

easiness. Serena would be angry, he knew. When he came back Anna had not gone into his wife's room.

"She told me to let her sleep. Last night when I went to bed, she said she'd keep awake for you, and then she'd take a sleeping powder."

"I didn't go in," said Dale awkwardly. "I thought I'd not disturb her."

The maid's glance was unfriendly.

"I'll just peep in now," he went on.

He tiptoed in cautiously. He was relieved to see that his wife was asleep. She lay like a wax figure, motionless. And then something—he never knew what instinct—made him touch her hand lying on the coverlet. It was cold, eerily cold. He touched it again, a look of alarm in his eyes.

"Come here, Anna!" he called. "Quick! Quick!"

There she lay, strange, dissatisfied Serena! A smile, mockingly sweet, curved the mouth, those lips that once he had loved to kiss! He gave a choked cry, and his hands went up to his eyes. He knew what had happened.

"Hush, sir! She's asleep, sir!" said Anna disapprovingly.

But he knew better.

Lying there, in the quiet pose he knew so well, she was not asleep this time.

No! Serena was not asleep. She was dead!

"WHY do you look so strange, sir?" said Anna, cold horror gripping her as she saw Dale's deathly face. "She's not worse, is she?" She bent and put her hand over the still one lying on the coverlet. Then she gave a shrill, hysterical scream. "She's cold! Mr. Dale, you don't think she's—"

"Hush, Anna!" said Dale, wincing. "My poor wife has found release at last!"

"You mean she's dead?"

He bowed his head. Again the maid screamed; then put her hand over her mouth.

"So she's dead!" she muttered. "And last night when I left her she was waiting, waiting for you to come to her, and you never came! And now it's too late! Poor thing lying there, waiting for you hour after hour and you couldn't spare her one moment!"

He looked at the woman in astonishment. There had never been any open enmity between them, but he had never liked her. Serena had considered her a very good maid, and his own dislike had therefore been kept hidden, but she was going beyond her province to reproach him now.

"No one can regret more bitterly than I do that I didn't go in last night, Anna," he said dully. "But, as you say, *it's* too late now. Send for Dr. Graham at once, and leave me."

There was a strange look in Anna's eyes as for a moment they rested on the young man's white face. Then, catlike she moved from the room.

When she had gone Dale fell to his knees, and laid his cheek against the icy coldness of that limp hand.

"I'm sorry, Serena! Was there anything I could have done for you, my dear, that I didn't do? I would have given half my life to change things for you! You, who loved life so, to be tied there, hurt me almost as much as it hurt you! Was there anything I could have done?"

The old cry of those left behind! The anguished heart breaking now. His mind went back to those early days when he had known no peace, no rest, because there was nothing he could do to ease things for her; but time had

dulled the feeling and he had taken up the threads of life again. Now he blamed himself. He shivered a little as he looked at her. So beautiful she was, so like what she had been in life that it was difficult to believe that she was dead. Pale, aloof Serena. What was she thinking now? That tempest of emotion was stilled forever, the wild beat at her heart that would not be appeased, although her slender body could take no more part in life's activities. The bird was released from the cage, the trapped thing free at last!

And then the door opened, and a childish voice said:

"Daddy, can I come in and kiss mummy good morning?"

Jumbo! Poor little motherless Jumbo!

With a stifled cry the young father leaped to his feet, stepping between the boy and the bed where his mother lay. With a gesture of pity he snatched his son up in his arms, and went swiftly from the room, and toward the nursery. How could he tell Jumbo what had happened? The boy began to chatter about the fair and all the wonders he had seen.

"I don't never remember going to bed, daddy, last night!" he said, his little face flushed and excited.

Dale groaned in spirit. Last night! Only last night!

"And I never remember saying good night to Alison!"

Alison! Into the man's heart came the recollection of her face as he had seen it last, so pitiful, tear-washed. How bitterly she would sorrow over that kiss when she knew that Serena was dead! He must show her that she was not to blame.

He sat there in the old rocking chair, with the boy on his knee, holding him close to his heart. How could he tell him that he would never again see the mother he had loved so much?

The door opened, and nurse stood there, her face full of pity.

"Dr. Graham is here, sir," she said gently.

He put the child down.

"Please see that Jumbo is kept occupied," he warned her, and she nodded.

NOW he was walking back to the sick chamber, which had for so long held the mere husk of what had once been lovely, vital Serena Manning!

"This is a sad and unexpected thing," said the doctor sympathetically. "Of course, in a case like hers it was not entirely unexpected, but there was no reason why she shouldn't have lived for many years."

"You mean you won't be able to give a certificate?" It was Anna's voice, harsh, repellent.

Dale started; he had not known she was there.

"Of course I'll be able to give a certificate," said the doctor testily. "I've been attending Mrs. Manning. That's perfectly simple!"

A veiled look crossed Anna's face. It puzzled Dale. What was it that the woman had against him? He knew quite well that, as the world judges, he had been a good husband to Serena. He had sacrificed his life on the altar of her whims and demands. He had stifled his manhood; had kept at her beck and call; had fought the rising tide of desire to go away from it all—

Presently they went out leaving the doctor alone. Anna paused and looked at him.

"I suppose I'd better leave as soon as the funeral's over. You won't want me now."

"There's no hurry," said Dale kind-

ly. "You've been a good maid, and if you care to stay while you look round for a new place I'll be glad to have you."

"I shouldn't like to stay now, sir," she answered darkly.

He stared at her. What did she mean by that?

"You mean that time would hang heavy on your hands?" he questioned.

"No, sir. I don't mean that!" She looked at him significantly, and then started as the bell rang, and moved away, and looked over the banisters into the hall.

A girl's voice sounded—Alison's sweet, troubled voice!

"Please tell me where Jumbo is? In the nursery? Oh, thank you, I'll go right up!"

She came, and instantly Anna and everything miserable was forgotten. Her face was full of sorrow.

"Oh, Dale!" she said, her brown eyes meeting his through tears. "Dad told me to come; he said I could help. Oh, I'm so sorry! I don't know what to say!" Her voice broke. "But do let me have Jumbo until—until after the funeral."

"How thoughtful you are!" said Dale brokenly. "I haven't told him yet."

"I'll tell him," said Alison bravely.

And now the tears blinded her, and she turned and made for the nursery.

Anna stood staring after her with malignant eyes.

AT the funeral of Serena Manning crowds lined the churchyard, for the village people remembered her beauty and high spirits of former days and had pitied her ever since the accident. Curious but kindly eyes were bent on Dale as he stood beside the grave.

How white he looked, how haggard! And yet, so gossip said, for two years she had lain like a log, not able to do anything for herself, as good as dead; all those weary days and nights!

"She's better off, poor thing!" muttered more than one of the watchers.

There were other mourners at the grave. Dr. Graham and his pretty daughter were there, and that grim-faced maid, Anna, in mourning so deep that she might have been related. The little boy, Jumbo, had not been brought.

And now the service was over, and Dale's heart had seemed to miss a beat as the last solemn words were spoken: "Dust to dust, ashes to ashes."

It was so cruel to think of Serena, who once had danced through life, lying there! And they must all come to it at the end! It seemed as though his heart were incased in ice that would not melt.

And now the crowd were dispersing.

Just for a moment he stood there staring down and became conscious that a woman in heavy mourning stood at the edge of the grave. It was Anna, her face twisted, her eyes red with weeping. Under that hard exterior there must have been affection, after all.

Privately, Dale hoped that after today he need never see Anna Sanderson again. There was some veiled enmity in her glance whenever her eyes rested on him and he could not understand it.

He turned to go back to the waiting car, and over the head of the departing crowd his eyes locked those of Alison's. As though she had spoken he felt her sympathy, her pity. Dear Alison, who loved him! How could it hurt Serena for him to feel a sense of peace at the thought of Alison's love? She was looking after Jumbo for him; had told

Jumbo that his mother had gone for a long journey into a country where all troubles are removed.

"Does that mean mummy can walk?"

"Yes, darling!" said Alison tenderly.

"Then I don't mind if she has gone!"

How wonderful to be a child, and accept things so easily! She tried to send the same message across to Dale, and she saw his face lighten a little, as though her message went home.

And now Dale got into the car. He was going back to the house to hear the will read.

He was glad, as the car rolled up the drive, to see that the shades were up. Entering the house, he was aware that some of the gloom had departed; the sun was streaming through. For the first time he could breathe freely. Then Anna came gliding through the hall.

"The lawyer is here, Mr. Manning," she told him. "And Judge Small and the Reverend Burnham too."

Vaguely Dale wondered why the lawyer should have invited them to hear the will read. Perhaps Serena had left some money to charity, which the minister was to handle. But why should the judge be present? Serena had scarcely known him.

The lawyer cleared his throat as Dale entered.

"I don't believe you knew that your wife made this will, Mr. Manning. She made it only a short time before her death. I sent for these gentlemen, because they are her trustees; therefore it was necessary that they should be here."

"Didn't she make me a trustee?" Dale asked, puzzled and hurt.

"No! I remonstrated, but she said she preferred it this way. She was not herself, you know, so I didn't press the point."

"I quite understand!" said Dale, but he didn't understand at all.

And now the last will and testament of Serena Manning was being read. It ended:

> "I give and bequeath all my worldly goods to my son, Julian Manning, save a yearly sum of two thousand dollars which is to be paid to my maid, Anna Sanderson. I leave nothing to my husband, for reasons he is aware of."

Dale blinked. It was a most amazing will. He was glad that she had left everything to Jumbo, but what did she mean by saying that she left nothing to him, for reasons that he was aware of? What reasons?

"I suppose she meant I have enough of my own!" he said, drawing his brows together in a puzzled frown.

"Something of that sort, no doubt," said Judge Small, sympathetically. "And don't forget that the poor soul was not normal at the end."

"It wouldn't be right to grieve too much when the release is so merciful," said the minister.

"I know," said Dale. "I feel that, too!"

THE house seemed oddly empty when every one had gone, and he paced up and down the big library, pondering moodily the events of the day. Why had Serena wanted to hurt him? She must have known that will would wound. What was her idea in making Judge Small and Mr. Burnham trustees? Did she think he would want the money she had left to Jumbo? Had he ever been anything but generous to her? He flung back his head and stared up at the portrait that hung above the mantelpiece. Serena, painted as she had been when they first

met all those years ago! A lovely thing she has been, fragile as a dream; the artist had painted her, not the white-hot creature that she was, but ethereal, exquisite. He looked at her as though to read an answer to the riddle. Why had she made that will?

Those luminous blue eyes looked far beyond him; it was almost as though a strange, secretive smile curved those rosy lips.

He gave a little shiver, wishing vaguely that he could have given her the ardent love that she demanded.

There came a tap at the door.

"Come in!" said Dale, glad to be roused from his absorption.

The door opened, and Alison entered. She walked across the room to him, and stood there, that little, appealing thing, with her tumbled russet curls, and her eyes so full of sympathy.

"I brought Jumbo back. He'll help you to bear it!"

"Oh, my dear," said Dale, "how good you've been to me! It's helped to know that he was out of it; I was afraid he might hear the servants talking."

"I felt that, too," said she softly. "He won't be afraid now, Dale. I told you he said that he doesn't mind 'so long as mummy can walk.'"

"Bless the boy!" said the young man in a moved voice. "Bless you, too, my dear. The thought of you has been like a cool breeze in a desert!"

"Oh, Dale, I've been so ashamed whenever I thought of that night before! She was lying there, perhaps even then, breathing her last! And you and I—! Oh, Dale, we kissed!"

"Don't blame yourself for that," he said gravely. "We meant no wrong. We wouldn't have hurt her for all the world."

He took her hand and gripped it hard. And suddenly into his heart there came that blessed sense of peace again that only Alison could bring. It was as though their spirits met, comforted and strengthened each other.

"I'm going now! You'll look in at Jumbo before you go to bed?"

"I won't neglect him," said Dale, smiling at her concern.

She went to the door and opened it swiftly. Some one moved away, a figure in black—

"Why, Anna!" said Alison, her face sober. It seemed as though she had been listening, but, of course, that was a horrid idea.

"I'm just going, Miss Graham," said Anna.

There was a hint of insolence in the woman's manner, which Alison did not like.

"I hope you will be happy in your next home," said Alison with quiet dignity.

"Mrs. Manning left me enough to live on comfortably, and provide for my boy. My future is secure, thanks to her kindness," said Anna.

"She was very generous," said Alison, wondering why Anna should stress this so now.

"She trusted me, you see," went on the woman, still that threatening note in her voice. "She knew she could trust *me!* But there's some that will hardly wait till she's cold in her coffin before they step into her shoes!"

Alison stared at her wonderingly. What on earth did she mean? Before she could demand an explanation Anna had opened the door, and with her suitcase in her hand, walked to the car that awaited her.

It was with a sigh of relief that Alison saw her go.

As she herself walked homeward across the park she thought of little

Jumbo, his artless, confiding ways, and the sweetness of him. And she thrilled as she remembered the touch of that small, dark head against her breast as she had soothed and comforted him. Dear little boy! It would be Jumbo who would comfort Dale, and make his loss seem less severe.

Looking up at the stars, Alison gave a little sigh. What had Anna meant? "There's some that will hardly wait till she's cold in her coffin before they step into her shoes!" Anna couldn't mean—herself? The girl's face went scarlet as understanding came. Anna guessed that she loved Dale! Anna, loyal to the mistress who had lain for two terrible years motionless on her couch, hated her, Alison, and no wonder! Sick misery flooded the girl. Love, which had come unsought, seemed hideous, cruel. Yet she had meant no sin. And now, surely, there was none? But she couldn't get Anna's sneering look and tone out of her mind.

CHAPTER III

THE DEAD HAND

THE next day Alison did not go near the Manning home, nor the next, and Dale called to see why. Jumbo wanted her; he was a lonely, forlorn little boy without her.

Quietly Alison told him of Anna's remark. That made Dale angry, but it made him understand that he must go very slowly. He loved Alison, not in the crazy, headlong way of youth, but with the deeper thrill of a man's strong, eternal affection; he must guard her from the gossip of this little village. For both their sakes he must school himself to wait.

A week of this told him that it was impossible to see Alison, and not show he cared. The villagers must soon notice how happy he and she, and Jumbo, were together, so he decided that he must go away, flee temptation. For a year he would wander lonely on the face of the earth. A year was a decent period of mourning. Then, convention said, he would be free to choose another wife! Convention! What did convention know of the human heart?

He told Alison one Sunday. She had just said good night to the child, and Dale was walking home with her. It had been raining, and the earth poured forth grateful fragrance. From beneath the dim aisles of the trees came the perfume of fern and moss. Nestlings, disturbed by their footfalls, cheeped under the brooding mother wing. A crescent moon swam in a sea of black velvet. It was as if a hush fell on their hearts.

Jumbo had been very dear that night. He had flung one arm round his father's neck, one round Alison's.

"Why must she go, daddy? Couldn't she stay so that to-morrow I could wake and find her? I'd rather find her than nurse!"

Alison's face had gone scarlet; Dale's had gone white.

And now some slinking thing of the night came out from cover—a flashed past—a vixen out hunting food for her cubs.

Startled, Alison turned to Dale. Instantly, like two catching fire, she was in his arms, his lips again on hers! It was the first time since the night of Serena's death. Almost instantly he released her, angry with himself. Oh, he had been right to decide to go away.

"It can't go on, Alison!" he said hoarsely. "I must go away! It's best, little girl! I love you, but we've so many things to think of that I must

keep it close in my heart, and I can't when you are near me. People would talk—they always do. It would hurt your reputation, and insult Serena's memory. I have no right to care for another woman so soon. We must separate for a year, dear."

A year to be separated! She couldn't bear it, and yet wisdom told her that he was doing the best thing for them all. How could people understand when they knew that Dale and she cared for each other? Oh, yes, she was glad that he was going right away.

Bit by bit life settled down to normal. Every day she went up to play with Jumbo. The days slipped by, summer days full of a quiet happiness. Deep in her heart Alison knew that the time would come when Jumbo would be more than just a little friend to her. He had begun to call her "Ally." Never would they be the conventional stepmother and stepchild; already love had linked them together with a chain that would never snap.

Sometimes Dale wrote to her, ordinary, conventional letters, giving her news of his travels. He had been to Switzerland, to Rome, farther afield, to Algiers, to India.

> Some day, if God is good to us, we two will travel together. I am storing up all sorts of lovely places in my mind until the day when I can show them to you.

She hugged that letter to her heart. She would be patient—she must! Every Sunday found her taking flowers to Serena's grave. A plain white marble cross had been placed at the head of it.

And then Dale returned, without acquainting any one of his intention. Indeed, he had not meant to return for another six months, but suddenly the longing for home and little son, for the sight of Alison's golden-brown eyes became unbearable.

Only six months had gone by, and he had meant to make it a year. But it had seemed a lifetime that he was separated from her. He arrived one afternoon just at dusk, and she was playing to Jumbo. The little boy, curled up near her, had fallen asleep.

Suddenly she found herself lifted by a pair of strong arms.

She turned her questioning face up to his—their eyes met.

"Dale! Oh, my darling!" And then she was silenced by his lips on hers.

How he had wanted her! How he had longed for this moment! All the old aching misery of the past ended. He was free, free to take her in his arms, to press her against his heart! To tell her that he loved her!

"Heart of mine! I love you so, I love you so!" he cried.

ALISON lay back in his arms, a thrill of pure ecstasy holding her speechless. Dale was back. And she, who had been thinking she must forget her longing for another long six months, could let herself go—could love him, yield to him, at last.

The small oval face was thinner than when he had last seen her. As his eyes devoured her he knew that that parting had been an eternity to her, too. Yet how lovely she was! Her eyes were closed, and the bronze lashes lay on her cheek like dusky fans. Her breath came quiveringly.

"It has been so long, my sweet!" he murmured.

"Oh, so very long!" she whispered, and now a tear squeezed through her lashes, and trickled down her cheek.

"But, heart's dearest, it's over now! No more parting—no more heartache!

Only to have each other, to be always together! Alison, dearest, I love you so terribly!" he told her.

"And I love you, Dale! I thought I could never wait so long, it's been so endless!" she whispered back.

"I meant to wait a year, but I couldn't bear to," he breathed.

He kissed her hair, the soft curve of her cheek, the dimple by her mouth. He kissed the little hollow where a pulse beat at her throat. It was as though he could never satisfy the hunger at his heart.

And now he released her, and she sank back on the music stool, shaken, breathless, but, oh, so overwhelmingly happy!

"Need we wait any longer?" said Dale, huskily, as he drank in with eager eyes the dear beauty of her face. She had changed somehow, this beloved girl of his. There was a graver, more womanly look about her. The glow in her cheeks; the curving scarlet of her lips, her eyes, like pools of inky darkness, fathomless.

"Oh, mustn't we, Dale? Six months! Is it not too soon?"

"I can't wait any longer! I want you, even as Jumbo wants you! You'll marry me at once?"

"It's what I want!" she breathed.

Then Jumbo roused and found his father, and when his extravagant delight had died down a little, and his nurse had taken him away to bed Alison and Dale walked back across the park to tell Dr. Graham the great news. They walked slowly, as though they longed to spin out every moment of this, their hour. They paused every now and then to look at each other. The harvest moon, round and golden, lit up her face so that he saw the magic of her dewy eyes; the love light there! To know happiness again; to have her for his! No one knew what that meant, not even Alison herself! No one knew how those last two years, living with Serena, had worn his nervous energy down till he seemed empty, drained! The strain of going in and seeing her, listening to her reproaches. The pity for her, the hatred of himself because he could enjoy a ride when she was tied. It was over—all over! No more to be tormented by the recollection of her lying there, waiting for him! Never again to hear her voice calling him: "Dale! Come back! I want you!" Alison had driven the specter away forever.

They found the old doctor pottering about in his surgery, and when they burst on him with their marvelous news, he was astonished.

"Well, I'm blessed!" he said. "I never dreamed of such a thing! I had no idea that you two cared! For all that, I'm glad! She'll make you a splendid wife, Dale old man! She's a girl in a million!"

Didn't he know it? Oh, didn't he?

Like wildfire the news spread. There were those who looked askance at the idea of a man's becoming engaged when his wife had been dead only six months; but there were others who had pitied Dale Manning, and who said that he had suffered long enough. The Reverend David Burnham was one. To Dale's relief he was one of the first to shake him by the hand, and wish him well.

Judge Small, the other trustee under Serena's will, was away, and so did not hear immediately about the engagement. When he returned a day or two later, from a business trip to New York, he was startled to find a letter awaiting him signed: "Serena Manning."

Serena Manning! Now how could

Serena, who had lain in her grave for six months, write to him?

Feeling perturbed, and not a little shivery, the old judge read the letter:

DEAR JUDGE SMALL:

I am writing this letter because I am a most unhappy woman. I hate to have to tell you, but Dale, my husband, loves another. He wishes me out of the way! Oh, it is a terrible thing to know, when you are lying like a log, useless, a dead thing already, that another wishes to fill your place!

Here am I, with every pulse beating high with life, as if I were a normal human being, and I know he has wearied of me! That he wants me to die! Dale wishes me dead—and I'm afraid! When a woman is lying alone, knowing that outside her husband is with another woman, hating the one who stands between, the barrier to his marriage, she wonders, in terror, when the end will be.

Perhaps I am morbid, fearing something that cannot be, but, on the other hand, it would be so easy to get rid of me. "A blessed relief!" people would say. "The poor thing is better off!"

Judge Small, I have made you a guardian of my son, because I trust you absolutely. Therefore, I now charge you, when I die, to see that there is a post-mortem examination to show how I died.

Your unhappy friend,
SERENA MANNING.

The hair on Judge Small's head prickled; he felt cold all over.

"A post-mortem!" he muttered. "At this date? Why, it's six months ago!"

He picked up the envelope and studied it closely. It must have been six months since that letter was written, and yet it had only just been mailed. Strange, he mused, his puzzled mind going over the past in an effort to account for it.

Serena Manning had believed that her husband loved another woman, before death had claimed her. Believed, of all incredible things, that Dale would hasten her death. Preposterous! Utterly unfounded! That she had honestly believed it he could not doubt, however; this explained why she had not made her husband a trustee.

"She must have been mad, mad!" he muttered. "Dale Manning is one of the best of fellows!"

But he could not ignore this letter. He was a magistrate and she had appealed to him. He must satisfy himself that Serena had been only morbid. He remembered Dr. Graham had attended her ever since her accident; he would see him at once.

THE doctor himself opened his door in answer to the bell.

"Good evening, judge," he said. "I hope you aren't in need of my services?"

"No, not from a point of health," said Judge Small, who had no intention of worrying his friend unnecessarily. "It's a point concerning Mrs. Manning's will."

"Go ahead," said Dr. Graham, waving him to a chair, and hospitably offering a box of cigars.

The judge lit up slowly.

"By the way," he began, "what did she die of?"

"Heart failure," said the old doctor.

"You made a thorough examination, I suppose, before you gave the certificate?"

"I gave the certificate without question," said Dr. Graham, in astonishment. "I'd been attending her for two years."

"I always understood that you thought she would live to a ripe old age?" Judge Small was apparently engrossed in the enjoyment of his cigar.

"Just so. Her death was a surprise

to me. Still, a doctor is not omniscient. He cannot always foretell how long life will last."

At that moment the door opened and Alison burst in, looking so radiant she made the old judge blink. He had always liked the girl, and the change in her was remarkable. It was as though some inner fire had been kindled; it brought out every curve, every tint of her, as though she radiated life.

"Oh, daddy, I hadn't the slightest idea you'd any one with you! I'll depart instanter!"

"Nothing of the sort, young lady," said her father, proudly conscious of her beauty. "Judge Small, my little girl is going to leave me soon. I suppose you've heard the news?"

"No," said the judge, smiling indulgently at the radiant vision. "I've been in New York, you see."

"She's engaged!"

"So that accounts for it! I knew something had happened to make her eyes dance like that. And who is the lucky man?"

"Dale!" said Alison, in a voice so soft, so thrilling that it told her love story without another word.

"Dale Manning," said her father, nodding his head. "And a lucky fellow he is, too."

"I'm the lucky one," said Alison. "I'm the happiest girl in the world!"

"That she is! Dale's one of the best. I'm the unlucky one!" mourned the doctor. "The best assistant I've ever had is going away."

The girl came to him.

"Not going far, daddy!" said Alison, rubbing her head childishly against his rough tweed coat. "It's something to know that I can make Jumbo happy. I think Dale deserves happiness, too."

"I'm sure of it!" said Judge Small thoughtfully.

He wrung her hand warmly, and a moment later took his leave.

Dr. Graham did not realize that he had gone without asking any questions regarding Serena's will.

The judge went back to his house, thinking deeply. Impossible to drop his thunderbolt at such a moment! To look at the girl's ecstatic face was enough to show that she was supremely happy. Six months had gone by since Serena Manning had written that letter. Too late to do anything! The morbid imaginings of a sick woman! Poor soul!

He locked the letter away, and firmly dismissed the subject from his mind. Easier said than done, however!

CHAPTER IV

THEIR HOUR

NO dark cloud hung over the happiness of Dale and Alison. The whole village seemed to rejoice with them, and if there was a criticizing voice they heard it not. Dale Manning felt as if he had come into a quiet harbor after the rough and tumble of the storm.

To his relief, Dr. Graham did not insist upon a long engagement. Dale had had a long talk with him.

"I love Alison so tremendously, and I don't want to do anything that would injure her. I'll wait six months, if you like. I'll wait a year! But it would be wonderful if you thought that wasn't necessary."

Looking up at the wistful face, the old man gave a moment to the past. How patient Dale had been with his wife! How kind! Virile, strong, at the very zenith of life, yet he had cut himself away from all that men count good for the sake of a jealous, selfish

woman, who wanted him to suffer as much as she did. Dr. Graham had a hatred of conventions, and of giving into public opinion. These two loved each other; they deserved their happiness. Then let them take it with both hands, while it was theirs to take.

"I shan't oppose a quick marriage," he said. "I love my little girl, and I believe you'll make her happy. I know what you did for Serena, Dale; I know, too, how hard it was. Marry my little girl and be happy!"

Dale wrung the old hand in a very passion of gratitude, and then dashed out to find his sweetheart.

She was nutting with Jumbo, and Rags was there, too, a boisterously happy Rags, scattering brown mold in every direction as he scratched at a rabbit hole.

Alison was up in a tree, shaking the branches, while Jumbo stood below holding a basket, his eager, flushed face the very picture of boyish bliss.

"Drop them in, Alison!" he cried in his ringing childish voice. "I'll catch them!"

Dale heard the silver of her laugh, and the dull rattle as the nuts in their green sheaths dropped. Then Alison turned and saw him, and almost tumbled out of the tree in her desire to reach him. He caught her in his arms and held her close.

"Alison! Best beloved! Darling!"

"Daddy, I do hope you're not going to spoil the nutting!" came Jumbo's plaintive voice. "She promised me faithful that she wouldn't think of you!"

"Now, that's cruel!" said Dale, turning his laughing face to his son. "Why shouldn't she think of me?"

"Because," said Jumbo, condemnation in his voice, "she stands still and forgets all about the nuts, or the story she's telling, and that spoils everything!"

"The sooner we get married the better, evidently," said Dale. "Then we'll settle down and become ordinary normal people that think nutting is the most important job in the world. Alison, your father has given his consent to an early marriage. What do you say, darling?" he asked anxiously, tenderly.

"You know what I say, Dale!" she answered in a soft whisper.

"I think I do, little heart! We'll be married in town, away from all this. We'll not let any one know except your father! I hunger to be alone just with you! I'll go in to-morrow and make all arrangements; and then you must come and we'll be married quietly. You don't mind, darling, if we don't have any fuss?"

She caught her breath. Mind! What did she want with pomp and ceremony? Her heart's desire was only to be his wife!

SO it was settled. Such happiness as she had never known thrilled Alison Graham as she made the simple preparations for her wedding day. No one knew that she was going to be married, and only one person saw her that day as she hurried through the little town to the station. Judge Small, riding by, caught a glimpse of her small, ecstatic face, and was reminded of that which he wanted to forget. It was a disquieting business.

When he got home he was told that the Rev. Burnham wanted to see him. He went into the library, expecting that he was to be bombarded for a check for some charity. The minister's face was very grave, however.

"I've come to see you on a very serious errand," he began. "I've had the most amazing letter. I felt I must come round and see you before I did anything. It's from Serena Manning!"

He fumbled in his pocket and brought out a letter which reminded the judge of the one he himself had received a little less than a month ago.

"It's in Mrs. Manning's writing, yet I got it only this morning," went on the other. "A thing I can't account for. I went so far as to call in at the post office and inquire why it had been so long delayed. They said it must have been mailed yesterday in the ordinary way. But read it, and see what you think of it."

Very unwillingly the judge took it.

DEAR MR. BURNHAM:

I made you a trustee because I trusted you, and, no doubt, you have wondered why I did not include my husband. The fact of the matter is, I do not trust him any longer. I know this will come as a shock to you, because you like to think there is only good in your fellow men, but I am a most wretched and miserable woman, because I know that Dale wants to get rid of me. Believe me, this is not the ravings of a morbid woman.

He and Alison Graham are in love! She teaches Jumbo, and meets Dale

She went to the door and opened it. A figure in black was crouching there—listening

every day, and I am powerless tied here, breaking my heart. Dr. Graham says I'll live for years—for years, think of that! When I know Dale is fretting at the barrier—don't you see? He cannot marry Alison while I live! Oh, I fear Dale won't let me live much longer! I am sure of it!

Keep my little boy from them—my Jumbo, all that I have left! I pray you help me!

SERENA MANNING.

"It is a very serious thing!" agreed Judge Small slowly. "I may as well confess to you, Mr. Burnham, that I also had such a letter. I considered it to be the outpourings of a woman who had too vivid an imagination, but to a certain extent she was right, for Dale and Alison Graham are engaged. And it was Dr. Graham who gave the certificate."

"I know! That's what made me feel I couldn't ignore this letter," said the minister, ruffling his hair helplessly. "What are we to do?"

The judge paced up and down. He couldn't get from his mind the thought of that radiant face that had flashed him a shy, ecstatic smile only that morning. She, at any rate, would not have been party to any misdeed! And how could one believe it of Dale Manning, either?

"The best thing we can do is to go to Graham and tell him about these letters."

"It's going to be a great shock for him," said the minister.

"It was a great shock for me," said the judge, as he unlocked his private drawer and took out the letter. "Still, I feel we must act; we are her trustees."

It was a pair of puzzled, uneasy men who presented themselves at Dr. Graham's house. It was not an easy matter to explain the reason for their visit, but the judge plunged directly into the subject and handed over the letter.

Dr. Graham looked surprised, as well he might. There was something so grave about his friends' manner that he realized something had disturbed them pretty considerably.

"You alarm me!" he said, and he smiled as he took the two letters. But the smile was wiped from his face almost instantaneously. The letter the judge had received was bad enough. He read it through to the end.

"This is preposterous! Dastardly!" he muttered, and picked up the second letter.

When Alison's name was mentioned, his face grew grim, and indignation blazed in his eyes.

"Serena Manning was crazy! She led that poor fellow a perfect hell of a life; I thought he was going to get some peace now she's dead, but she can't let him alone even now. There's only one thing, gentlemen!" He faced them, this kindly old country doctor, and there was determination on his face. "The body of Serena Manning must be exhumed!"

THE others looked at each other dubiously. Each knew what this would mean. The quiet little village would become the center of an intolerable scandal, a hotbed of gossip. Whatever the result—and, of course, there could be only one result — a most unpleasant experience awaited them all.

"I insist!" said the doctor, bringing his brows together in a rigid line. "It's the only thing to be done!"

"I'm inclined to agree with you," answered the judge with a sigh. "What do you say, rector?"

"I hate the idea, but it seems the only thing to be done for the sake of

all concerned." Mr. Burnham turned to the doctor, a look of sympathy on his face. "I'm afraid this will be very unpleasant for your daughter."

"Alison would be the first to wish it done!" said her father decidedly. "But I'm sorry for Dale. I was his wife's doctor, and I know what sort of life she led him. She was insanely jealous of anything that even interested him; her love for her child was as water to wine compared with the love she bore her husband. The hours that poor man sat in her room! The misery he lived through when away from her, because she grudged him it! He is sensitive, kindly, and she made him believe he was guilty—"

"Guilty of the accident?" broke in the judge.

The doctor nodded.

"In some strange way she put the blame on him. I watched the whole sickening business with an intense pity for the poor fellow, always. It was a blessing when she went, I'll admit, but I'd stake my hope of Heaven on Dale Manning's honor. That man could no more have planned his wife's death than I could plan Alison's! Don't you realize what this means?" He struck one hand on his desk. "She accuses him of murder—of callous, cold-blooded murder. The sooner we have a post-mortem on Serena Manning's body, the better!"

There came a ring at the bell, and a moment later a maid brought in a telegram. The doctor opened it, and then a bitter smile curved his lips.

"This telegram is from my daughter, Alison. Read it!" He thrust it into the hand of the judge.

"I am the happiest girl in the world.
"ALISON MANNING."

"Alison *Manning!*" exclaimed Judge Small, in a startled voice. "Then that means—" He paused, and looked anxiously at his old friend.

"Exactly!" said the doctor. "They were married this morning! I'd just returned when you came in."

The judge's mind went back to that morning when he had seen Alison on her way to the station. No wonder she had looked so ecstatic. She was going to be married to the man of her heart! Kind, happy, innocent Alison! Oh, the thing was impossible! It was an ugly shadow that must be lifted!

The sound of a shrill whistle made all three men jump. Then, again that bitter smile crossed Dr. Graham's face as he lifted the speaking tube.

"Is that you, Jumbo?" he said. "Well, you can come down to me in ten minutes."

He turned to the two men.

"Jumbo!" he said. "I've got Jumbo here. He loves to use the speaking tube."

The two men looked at each other, horror in their eyes. They had forgotten Jumbo! What good would it do to have this thing raked up now? There would be no harm in waiting.

"I didn't dream that Alison was going to be married so soon," said Judge Small slowly.

"Blame me for that," groaned her father. "I advised them to do it quickly and quietly. I thought that poor boy had suffered enough to last a lifetime, and deserved a little happiness. I don't know, even now, that had I been aware of this I should have advised them differently."

He looked up at the two men with defiance, and suddenly Judge Small turned to the minister.

"If you are of my opinion we'll let this matter drop, at least until we've seen Dale himself."

"That's just what I was thinking," responded the other, relief in his voice. "We'll wait until Dale comes back, and then we'll see what he thinks about it all. I'd hate to spoil Alison's honeymoon."

"I'm one with you there," said the doctor, "but I shan't rest until this matter has been thrashed out!"

WHEN Alison and her father arrived in New York they were met by Dale. The few days he had been away from her had seemed an eternity. Never would he forget the thrill that coursed through him as the crowd streamed up the stairs and he saw her eager little face raised to him. Like a cameo it was, clearly etched, perfect in his eyes. He embraced her, trembling a little. He had thought that he loved her quietly, but he knew now that there was nothing quiet about his love. It was a very mill race, a riot of emotion storming him.

"Darling!" he whispered. "I was afraid you might not come, after all!"

"But you knew, Dale!" said Alison. "You knew nothing on earth would keep me from you!"

"I know! And yet it seemed as though it would be too great a happiness!" he whispered back.

He had the limousine outside the station, and he drove them down to City Hall, and there Dale Manning married Alison Graham.

Her father had to return home at once; they took him back to the station and then were alone together—man and wife. There was no turning back to the old, only going forward to peace and harmony and quiet. They loved each other with a tremendous love.

"Mrs. Dale Manning!" he whispered.

She smiled up at him, half shy and half enraptured at hearing her new name.

They intended to go to the shore, but had not settled how long the honeymoon was to be.

"It's never going to end!" said Alison softly. "Even when we are back home again our honeymoon is going on!"

That night they stayed at a big hotel in Atlantic City, and amid the cosmopolitan crowd those two saw only each other. She wore a frock of white tulle, and looked like a June rosebud. Over the dinner table his eyes held hers.

"I'm so happy, Alison! I don't feel as though I'd ever lived before today!" he said huskily.

And, after that glorious days together! Days in which they went from place to place of interest, stopping here and there when fancy willed. Alison had seen so little in her short, busy life. Dale loved each moment with her, eager, interested, vital Alison. She made everything seem new and exciting. There were days when they rode together through the autumn landscape, long evenings when they went for walks, or stood on the top of the cliffs, and stared down at a moonlit sea. Sometimes they put up at quaint countryside inns, and there, in front of a blazing fireplace would sit, just happy to be together.

"Do you know, it's a month since our wedding day!" said Alison suddenly, when they called at the post office of a little Pennsylvania town and found a letter from her father. There wasn't much news in it—it concerned principally Jumbo and Rags.

He did not exactly ask her to return, but there was a wistful note that touched Alison.

"I've grown selfish, Dale; I've forgotten daddy and Jumbo. It's as though you alone are my life!"

"I feel that, too," said he. "We really ought to go back! I've loved it all, but we mustn't forget them. Our honeymoon won't cease because we've gone home, darling!"

He caught her to him with both tenderness and passion. He stroked the luxurious chestnut curls, and there was a new softness in his eyes.

"We will go back, little heart!" he whispered. "Our happiness is big enough for us to share!"

So they turned their backs on their adventuring and went home.

A few days later they had a housewarming. The town came in a body to welcome Alison as Dale Manning's wife. A new dignity had come to Alison as she stood in the foyer of the big house, with Dale at her side, greeting old and new friends. How kind every one was! How happy she felt! Jumbo had been allowed to stay up for an extra hour, and he stood at her side, a picturesque little figure, evidently devoted to his new mother.

They made a charming picture as they stood there, so Judge Small thought as he bent over Alison's hand. Later on he joined Mr. Burnham.

"What do you say to letting the whole thing drop? Those three are so happy; and I'm inclined to agree with the doctor that it's all the suspicions of a jealous, morbid woman. There is such open, frank joy here that I can't bring all that trouble on them."

"I'm of your opinion," answered the minister quietly. "No good purpose can be served by spoiling this."

They buttonholed Dr. Graham, and drew him into the conclave; it was only natural that he should be easily talked over. They were unanimous that the two letters should be destroyed and forgotten.

But a week later Judge Small had a visit from the local constable.

"I've come to ask you, sir, for an order of exhumation for the body of the late Mrs. Manning. Three people in the village have had letters written by her stating she believed her husband meant to poison her. I've had a delegation call on me and nothing will do but I should come to you to get an order."

"I suppose you've got permission from Mr. Manning?" asked the judge, thoroughly taken aback.

"No, sir," said the constable. "He wasn't in when I called, but I thought maybe you'd go back with me and explain to him."

For a moment Judge Small quailed before the task allotted him. Then he straightened his shoulders.

"I'll come with you now!" he said.

CHAPTER V

"SHE WAS POISONED!"

ALISON had been out riding with Dale and Jumbo. A lovely, lissome creature she was in her riding habit, the russet curls spraying from under the jaunty cap.

Along the hard high road to the marshes they went, three blissfully happy people; nothing to warn them of the black cloud which was so soon to envelop them.

A rime of frost had made the ground hard, and the ring of the hoofs made the only sound. Alison was thrilling with happiness. It was all so lovely! The clear blue sky above, the glint of sunlight on the bay, etching each wave with a beauty that was indescribable.

"Rags nearly caught a rabbit yes-

terday, Ally," came in Jumbo's high-pitched voice. "He howled when it ran into its hole and he couldn't get it out."

Alison laughed like a chime of silver bells. Dale thrilled, as always at the sound, little thinking how soon it would be stilled.

"Race me, Ally!" cried the little boy.

"Time us, Dale!" said Alison, as much of a child as Jumbo.

"One to be ready—go!" he cried. Jumbo won, jubilantly.

The salt tang of the wind in their faces, the glossy brown coats of the horses, like shining, newly fallen chestnuts, the exhilaration of the fast motion! Was ever a girl so fortunate as she!

"We'll be late for lunch if we don't go back," she said at last, as loath to turn as if she had known what awaited them.

They cantered back, arriving a few moments after the policeman and Judge Small.

Dale leaped down, and then lifted his wife from the saddle, greeting the visitor as he did so. What was up? To his astonishment, the judge whispered:

"Get rid of Mrs. Manning!"

"Take Jumbo up to the nursery, darling," said Dale, a curious dread creeping over him.

"You'll stay to lunch, Judge Small?" said Alison. "Come on, Jumbo."

They scampered away—lovely young Alison, without a care in the world, and the joyous child.

The magistrate stifled a sigh.

Now they were in the library, and Dale turned. Judge Small opened his mouth, closed it with a snap.

"Mr. Manning," began the constable, a trifle diffidently, but quite firmly for all that, "there's something unpleasant going about. Letters supposed to be written by a dead woman are being received by people in this village."

Dale looked puzzled. No suspicion of the truth came.

"Every one who knew Serena's handwriting is sure she wrote them," added the judge.

Dale caught his breath as if some one had struck him a blow.

"You mean—people are receiving letters written by Serena?" he said, startled.

"I do. Though she's been dead close on ten months, letters in her writing are being received and they are making unpleasant suggestions about you, Dale."

The young man's heart seemed to stop beating. There flashed into his mind Serena's face, like a death mask long before death claimed her. Serena, grudging him activity, wishing to chain him to her side, wanting him to be there always—always—binding him! But she was dead! She could hold him no longer!

He pulled himself together. "What suggestions?" he asked quietly.

"She believed that you were poisoning her!"

DALE sprang to his feet. "Serena believed I was poisoning her!" he echoed incredulously. Then he drew himself up. "There must be some mistake," he said frigidly. "You'd better see Dr. Graham. He signed the certificate."

"Unfortunately," said the constable respectfully, "Dr. Graham is your wife's father."

Dale staggered back. Was this man suggesting there was truth in what Serena had imagined!

"It's like this," broke in Judge Small, "evidently Serena conjured up morbid pictures in her mind. Dr. Graham gave the death certificate from what he knew of the case, not from an examination, I understand. I went into that with him, because I received one of those letters some time ago."

Dale's bewildered face stared at him.

"The minister did, too," the old man went on gravely. "We ought to have acted, but by that time you were married, and we were convinced there was nothing in the story. However, it can't be ignored any longer. There is only one thing to be done to prove that the story is not true. The body must be exhumed and a post-mortem held. That will settle things once and for all."

"It can be done very quietly, Mr. Manning," broke in the constable, "if Judge Small will make out the warrant. No one need know."

"Thank you, Roberts," said Dale.

He turned away, sick with misery. Serena, whom he had loved devotedly, and had so truly served! Serena to believe this horrible thing about him! All those long hours she had spent in her room, could she have been engrossed in thoughts like this? In fear of her life! Pity swept over him in a flood. Poor, unhappy, terrified Serena! Did she really believe that he would do so vile a thing! Had the accident done more than break her beautiful body? Had it injured her mind, too?

And then as he entered the house he heard Alison's gay and happy voice, and he shrank back, dismayed. Could it be kept from her? Oh, whatever happened, let her be spared!

"Couldn't Judge Small stay?" she asked in surprise. "He looked so very solemn and important that I supposed he was busy."

She came to him and ruffled her chestnut head against his arm, and he looked down at the fair, innocent face. Not a cloud to darken her blue sky! Yet he realized that she must know. People had been getting letters, and he couldn't expose her to curious looks and gossip unprepared.

"Alison, my darling, I want you to be strong! Something very disagreeable has happened. It will soon pass over, because it can be proved that she was wrong. But Serena had a very queer idea in her head at the last."

The girl straightened herself. In a flash Serena's face came into her mind. At times the sick woman had had a hard, almost vengeful look. At that moment Alison felt the first agony of the cold, relentless grip, which was to twist her life, so beautiful, so fair, into a thing of horror and of shame.

"Tell me, Dale. I'm strong enough to know anything that you know," she said quietly.

"She believed I poisoned her, darling! Somehow or other she must have left letters, because people are receiving them!"

"She must have been mad!" gasped Alison. "You were so tender, so wonderful to her! Your patience! I wondered sometimes that you didn't go crazy! Oh, Dale, do you think she was mad?"

"I think she wasn't quite sane," he answered, thankful that Alison had jumped to that conclusion. "They are going to exhume the body, and hold a post-mortem."

Alison was on the point of collapse. Then she saw her husband's face, white, haunted, and the courage that was in her came to the surface.

"Then, that's all right," she said. "There's nothing more to worry about! They'll get their proof, and

I'm not going to be miserable about it any longer! You're not to blame for her wild thoughts, darling. You were wonderful to her. Let's go and have lunch!"

Oh, the splendid little thoroughbred! Dale's arm went round her waist, and he held her close, thrilling to her faith in him.

AT dead of night the exhumation of Serena Manning took place. Easy enough to say no one should know. Half the village seemed to be hanging about the cemetery, for all the authorities' determination to be secret.

A day or two later Dale was called to the telephone to speak to Judge Small.

"I have serious news for you," the old voice said very gravely. "Serena died of poison."

Dale's body seemed to collapse; he couldn't breathe. He clutched the receiver and made a violent effort to speak.

"*What?*" he gasped.

"She was poisoned by arsenic! More than enough was found in her body to have caused death."

"Then she committed suicide! Oh, my poor, unhappy wife!"

"Suicide!" said the judge. "After those letters? Make no mistake, Dale Manning! Your wife was murdered!"

CHAPTER VI

LIFE CAN NEVER BE THE SAME

DALE stumbled out of the room, his face gray. What did it mean? What could it mean? How could it have happened?

Alison was hovering about the hall. All morning she had felt a strange uneasiness. Now she saw Dale's face, and icy terror clutched at her heart. She had never seen him look like that before.

"Dale!" she cried. "Oh, my dear, my dear! What is it?"

She drew him into her room and closed the door. Her heart was thumping so wildly that she felt it must leap from her breast, but she strove to calm her own agitation. She must be strong for him.

"How can I tell you, Alison?" he said brokenly. "The most diabolical thing has happened! I can't explain it! What have we done that this should come to us?"

"Tell me, darling," she said, shivering, but forcing her teeth to keep from chattering. "Tell me!"

"Serena died from arsenic poisoning!" he muttered hoarsely.

It was as though life drained from Alison. Every vestige of color left her cheek; she swayed like a young sapling swept by a gale. His hands caught her before she fell. Why had he married her? If only he had waited until the year was up! Nothing would have been so bad if he hadn't dragged her into this horror. If only he had waited!

"Alison! Don't look like that, my darling! If it hurts you then I'll wish I'd never crossed your path!" he pleaded hoarsely.

She was being weak! She must fight this deathly horror that swept her, must choke back the fear that filled her mind.

"I'm all right," she said bravely. "Oh, Dale, who could have killed Serena? Who could have wished her death?"

"Don't you see, Alison, there is no one who could have but me! Every one will believe I did it! They'll say

it was because I wanted to marry you!"

They clung together. Could their love, which had seemed so wonderful, so pure, so almost holy, have done this to them? Could their love have been the wicked thing that people would think? Was it so hideous that they had cared, even before Serena had died? She choked back the sobs that threatened to strangle her. She must be strong to uphold him.

"Do you really think people will believe that, Dale?" she said shakily.

"I have no doubt of it," he answered, covering his eyes with his hands, so that she should not see the desperation there. "It's no good refusing to face things. Every one will believe I killed her!"

ALTHOUGH they were somewhat prepared, the shock of the arrest was devastating. Outside a wintry sun shone golden on a world of pristine purity. Snow had fallen in the night, causing Jumbo to clap his hands in excitement, and demand that daddy should go out with him to make a snow man. With that cloud hanging over them, Dale and Alison strove with all their heart to hide their unhappiness from the boy.

"Look, daddy, we can get two pieces of coal and make him have eyes. Isn't he a beauty? We only want a hat and a pipe."

Dale lifted his wretched face from the grotesque snow man and caught sight of some men walking across the untrodden snow toward him. He knew!

"Listen, Jumbo," he said urgently, "I want you to go in and tell mummy that she must be strong, because we love each other! Ask her for an old hat and a pipe. Say daddy has had to go."

The boy danced off.

Dale waited until the men arrived.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Manning," said the leader, "but we've got our duty to perform. I have a warrant here for your arrest on a charge of poisoning your wife. I must warn you that anything you say will be used against you!"

Dale's face went white as death. He looked up at the house where he had known such different emotions. Unrest, disturbance, bitterness of soul; and then blissful, undeviating peace. Before he returned what would have happened? If ever he did return!

He could not bear the thought of Alison. She had been like a gay, singing bird, but the bird's song was choked, the flight done.

Then he turned and went with the policeman.

She stared at the brilliant scene in which she had no part

Sandra Gives Thanks

By JANE LITTELL

THANKSGIVING DAY! And raining, at that. Sandra Smith stood at the window of her cheap little hotel room and decided that it was gloomier inside than out, and that she needed a cup of coffee badly enough to venture forth after it.

A cup of coffee and a doughnut. She could get them both for a dime down the street and coffee alone was ten cents in the hotel coffee shop.

That doughnut was very likely to be all she would get to eat this Thanksgiving Day, too.

An hour later she came plodding back through the rain, to find herself locked out of her room! The manager told her that the hotel could no longer shelter her unless her bill was paid. And there wasn't any possible way of paying it!

Any way she looked at it, *that* was tragedy.

She had gone out dressed for rain. When the sun came out, she would look, in her old clothes, raincoat and rubbers, like some one dressed for a poverty party. And to-morrow the casting was to begin for that Five Arts picture!

She couldn't—*couldn't*—appear in the casting office looking like this.

She had fifteen cents in her purse, and there wasn't a soul to appeal to

Go gle

for help. Hollywood is just about the worst place in the world to be broke in.

At six o'clock that Thanksgiving evening, it was still raining. Sandra—weary, rain-soaked, weak from hunger—just had to find shelter somewhere. She turned into the entrance of the Roosevelt Hotel and sank into a deep chair in the lobby with a sigh. The soft lights, the deep chairs, the air of well-being that pervaded the big lounge, were like comforts from another world.

Celebrities drifted past her. Dinner parties gathered to disappear into the Blossom Room. Did she just imagine it, or was that an all-pervading aroma of Thanksgiving turkey? Poor Sandra gulped, and fought back the tears of loneliness, of despair, of aching hunger.

What would they do to her, she wondered, if she walked into the hotel dining room, ordered her dinner and ate it, and then told them she hadn't any money? Would they put her in jail? Even the prospect of jail didn't seem so awful to-day. At least she would be sheltered from the rain—

"San-dray Smith! Miss San-dray—Smith!"

The girl jerked upright. She couldn't believe her ears. Who on earth would be paging her in the Roosevelt lobby? She jumped to her feet and peered anxiously about.

The page boy disappeared into the Blossom Room.

"Miss—San-dray—Smith!"

Sandra hurried to the desk.

"Somebody is paging me!" she almost panted. "Sandra Smith."

There was a little delay, and then the message came from the switchboard:

"Sorry, Miss Smith. The party left the wire. But here's a note for you. We've been expecting you. Your room is ready. 1004. Here, boy! Miss Smith's baggage!"

Sandra could only gape at the clerk. She wondered afterward why he hadn't seen her astonishment and understood it. Then she remembered that he had had to search for the note. Probably by the time he thrust it into her nerveless hand, she had managed to get her mouth shut. Maybe she hadn't looked as dumb as she felt.

She managed to open the envelope, and her unbelieving eyes read:

> Hi, there, you gadabout!
> I got tired of waiting for you. And Penn came along with the idea of a few days' hunting down in Mexico, so I'm off. Move your things into 1004 and wait for me. If you're broke—and when aren't you?—you can get money at the desk. I arranged for everything.

It was signed only "K."

K! K! Frantically Sandra searched her mind for a relative or friend or even an acquaintance with an initial K. She didn't know anybody named Penn, either—

It was a mistake, of course. It couldn't be anything else. But she had told the clerk she was Sandra Smith. What could it mean? She stood there, staring at the note, not thinking, just waiting for inspiration to dawn upon her. And then she heard the little Filipino boy asking:

"Baggage? Baggage? Pleas-s-se."

"I'll have to—see about—my baggage later," she heard her own voice saying, much to her astonishment.

Smilingly, ingratiatingly, the little bellboy showed her the key, and started for the elevator. Sandra found herself following him like one hypnotized. Up in the elevator they went. Down the tenth floor corridor. And then she was standing in the middle of the luxuri-

ously furnished bedroom, staring wide-eyed at the door the departing boy had closed softly behind him.

Four sheltering walls! She gazed about her longingly. A luxurious looking bed—probably soft as down after the lumpy one she was accustomed to. Through an open doorway, the lighted bathroom.

"If you're broke—and when aren't you?—you can get money at the desk. I arranged for everything."

For some other girl, of course. What a lucky girl!

SANDRA shivered suddenly, and sneezed. Oh, she mustn't catch cold! She had enough other troubles without a cold. And then she realized how wet she was and what a comfort a hot bath would be.

Temptation drew her to the bathroom. A wide white tub. An array of soft towels. The comfort of being warm again—

"Well, a bath wouldn't cost K anything . . . I wonder . . . Shall I?"

Another sneeze decided it. She turned on the water in the tub and stripped off her soggy clothes. She turned to hang them on chairs near the radiator—and almost screamed.

There, on the dresser, the only personal thing in that luxuriously impersonal room, was a life-size photograph of a whimsically smiling man! She grabbed up the blanket from the foot of the bed, and draped it around her. That photograph was too real for comfort!

Then she walked over to inspect it. K, probably. There was an inscription. Yes, it was K.

> Why you should want this, I don't know. But here it is. I did my best to look pleasant. K.

Sandra stared at it for a long moment, smiling back, then remarked:

"Well, big boy, I'd say you did a right smart job of looking pleasant. I feel much better about the bath for which I'm about to be indebted to you. So I will have something to be thankful for. Thanks for saving the day from total loss, K." she said, whimsically.

She really felt that much better, just to be inside four sheltering walls for a little while, just anticipating the relief of getting her clothes dried, and her body warmed in a hot bath.

"I hope you don't get back, young man, before I get out of the tub," she said, thoughtfully, after a glance through the open door that led to a sitting room. Then she decided to investigate a bit. Drawing her blanket closer about her, she called through the door:

"Oh, K!"

No answer. Into the sitting room she went, to turn on the lights. Through it, into a very masculine bedroom. The sitting room and bedroom both shrieked of male occupancy.

Sandra Smith stood there and laughed—a bit hysterically. It was such an idiotic situation! And then her mirth was interrupted by a sudden sob. It was an *awful* situation! Suppose he should come in and find her, draped in a blanket! Suppose the real girl he was expecting should turn up! Somehow Sandra feared the girl more than she did the man.

She turned back to his photograph, and appealed to it through her tears.

"You understand, K. I'll be ill if I don't get warm and dry. If you were here, you'd probably be very considerate about it. You look like that sort of a man . . . Oh, why couldn't I really be the lucky girl you are expecting? Why do I have to find *you*—this way? You're—the—grandest-looking person—I've ever seen!"

And then she trailed into the bathroom, to mingle her tears with the hot water. But the bath relaxed her, soothed her, and life looked a great deal more cheerful when she finally scrambled out.

She stopped before the picture and talked to it. "You wouldn't mind my staying here, would you? You'd understand?"

Her clothes were still soaked. No use putting on wet clothes when half an hour more would dry them. So she wrapped herself in the blanket again, and curled up on the bed.

SHE hadn't meant to go to sleep. She had meant only to get her clothes dry and get out of there, leaving a whimsical little note of explanation. She owed K that. But when she awoke, her wrist watch told her it was eleven o'clock. At night. And her stomach told her it was about three days past dinner-time.

She had to get out of here! She had to find a place to sleep. She couldn't stay here! She put on most of her clothes. But her dress! It was puckered and shrunk. She pulled at it, smoothed it, tried to restore something of respectability to it. And then she sat down and cried—a regular deluge of tears this time. Everything in the whole world was wrong. There was only one thing left to happen—K might come. And she couldn't bear to have him find her in this state—

Somehow in the few hours in that room, K became a person of importance to her, the sort of person for whom you put your best foot foremost.

The sort of person you just must impress—just must make like you—

For K, she had to get out of this jam. Some day she had to tell K about it, some day when the story was old enough to be funny. Heaven knew it wasn't funny now!

"And the only chance in the world I've got to get out of this jam is to get a part in that Five Arts picture to-morrow!" she wailed. "I *can't* appear clad in wrinkles! Not when I have to show them how well I can wear clothes. Oh, what shall I do!"

That took thought. Maybe—if the dress were pressed—

But how in the world could she get it pressed?

Temptation . . . If she called the bellboy and sent the dress down to be pressed—

She went and stood in front of the photograph again.

"Would you mind very much, K?" she asked, wistfully. "I'll leave a note explaining, and I'll return the price of the pressing as soon as I get to work. It really isn't stealing. It's only borrowing—without your leave. And I ask you, K, what else is there to do?"

The dress went to be pressed at eleven fifteen. She told the boy it had to be back by twelve. She *had* to get out of there! She couldn't bear to have K find her so woebegone and forlorn. Not K.

At twelve-fifteen she telephoned down to ask where her dress was.

"But you didn't want it till noon, did you, Miss Smith?" came the operator's surprised voice. "We'll have it for you by then. The tailor's shop is closed now. Closes at midnight."

Now she *was* in for it! She couldn't leave that room without a dress! She had to stay there till noon next day—*had* to! And anything might happen in twelve hours! K might come, or the real Miss Smith—

"Oh, K! I'm desperate!" she said, frantically. "I've *got* to stay here tonight! I can't face the world in teddies and a raincoat! Oh, I didn't mean to do this—honestly, K, I didn't! But every minute I get in deeper and deeper—"

How much deeper she didn't realize until the next morning.

The telephone awoke her. A voice said:

"I'm very sorry, Miss Smith, but we've ruined your dress. If you'll drop into the shop, we'll make whatever adjustment seems fair to you—"

"*Ruined* it!" gasped Sandra. "*Ruined* it!"

"—can't possibly repair it—adjustment—" she heard faintly. But she couldn't listen any more.

No dress at all! And this was the day they were casting the Five Arts picture. Her only chance, and she couldn't even get there. Oh, was this punishment? For stealing a bath? That was all she had intended to take from K—and look at the price she had to pay for it!

And what could she do? Button her raincoat up over her teddies and try to get away with it? She tried it before the mirror, saw the uselessness of it, and burst into tears. There was *nothing* she could do. She would have to stay there until K came—unless she starved in the meantime—and then throw herself on his mercy. Imagine asking a man like K to go out and buy you a dress so you could remove your unwanted person from his suite! Just imagine it! At the thought she cried the harder.

She did hear a door slam vigorously, but she was too deep in woe to pay proper attention to it. But at the first

sound of that masculine voice, she sat up with a stifled scream.

"Oh, Andrea, honey! Are you up? Come here, you gadabout!"

SHE huddled the clammy raincoat about her desperately. *What could she do?*

"Come here, baby!" called the voice. "I know you're there. You never got up this early in your life—"

The voice came closer, and stopped in the middle of a sentence. Sandra, huddled in the middle of the big bed, was peering out over her coat collar.

"Well! Who are you?" asked the man in surprise. "Where is Andrea?"

"I'm—here by mistake. I don't know where—she is," said Sandra, faintly.

"But they told me at the desk that she was here," K insisted.

"They thought I—was she," confessed Sandra, even more faintly.

"They did, eh?" said K, with a puzzled air. "Well, suppose you come into the sitting room and tell me all about it."

Just as she had expected him to act! A warm little glow of gratitude flooded the girl. Oh, what a grand person he was! And what gosh-awful rotten luck to meet him this way!

"I can't," she managed.

"Why not?" he asked.

"I—haven't got—any dress. And this — raincoat — is transparent," she managed to explain.

His eyes blinked in astonishment.

"That doesn't make sense. Here. Wait a minute—"

He returned in a moment with a big woolly robe of his own and tossed it on to the bed. Then he marched back into the sitting room. Sandra discarded the cold raincoat that was useless as a covering anyway, since you could practically see through it, and donned the bathrobe. A foot of it dragged on the floor, and six inches of sleeves dangled beyond her finger tips. Uncontrollable tears wet her cheeks at the picture she made. But she marched to the sitting-room door with all the desperate courage of an aristocrat going to his execution.

K was at the telephone ordering breakfast for two!

"Oh, I knew you'd be that sort of a man!" she breathed.

"What sort of a man?" he asked, turning to her—and then he laughed. "You do look so—funny. Remember that picture where a magician shrunk people to the size of ants? And all their clothes fell in mountainous piles about them?"

But it wasn't funny to Sandra. It was the worst sort of tragedy. She covered her face with her hands, and turned to go back into her own room, tearing sobs shaking her.

"Here! Here! You poor child!" cried K, crossing the space between them in great steps. "No more teasing. I promise. What you need is food —and comfort."

He swooped her up in two strong arms as if she were a baby and carried her to a big armchair. He turned her tear-wet face against his shoulder and held it there, patting her gently—and impersonally—with his free hand.

"Cry it out, and then tell me. Nothing is so bad that it can't be mended."

"This is! Oh, this is terrible," sobbed Sandra. "And the worst part —is having to tell—*you*—about it."

"What's the matter with me?" asked K. "I promise not to bark at you, or bite either, for that matter. I'm not an ogre—"

"That's the worst of it!" gasped Sandra. "You're so—darned—*nice!*"

"Well, then," said K cheerfully, "spill the beans, sister, and let's set about straightening out the mess. I'm good at that. I've had lots of practice."

Sandra didn't want to talk. She wanted to stay right there in his arms, motionless, drinking in the comfort of being protected. It was wonderful! That feeling of being safe, even for a moment, of being cherished, even if it was only out of pity, braced up her dragging spirits as much as that hot bath last night had revived her fainting body.

K was—everything wonderful! And he belonged to somebody else! At that thought the tears flowed again. It was the last stroke of rotten luck to have him so wonderful, and know that he belonged to some other girl.

Somehow the story came tumbling out. All of it. All about the long waits between jobs, all about stretching the dollars out thin, all about being locked out of her hotel, all about the long, wretched Thanksgiving Day spent trying to locate some one who might help her, all about the disasters that followed the stolen bath—and, finally, the tragedy of the dress.

"And they're casting a picture at Five Arts to-day that I've been practically promised a part in. I ought to be out there now. It's my only chance of getting out of this jam—"

"We'll get you there, Sandra," said K, just as a knock on the door announced breakfast. "First—we eat. Or, rather, first, I telephone, while the boy is setting up the table—"

And a moment later:

"Tell me, what size clothes do you wear?"

"Size sixteen," said Sandra hopefully, her big eyes adoring. Oh, what a man he was! Just the sort of a man she had known was somewhere in the world. Just the sort of man she had been waiting for all her life. A real honest-to-goodness Prince Charming! Oh, she would love him all her life for what he was doing for her! And his only remembrance of her would be tinged with pity; that was the unbearable part of it.

When a girl meets the one man in in the world, thought Sandra, his first thought should be one of admiration, not pity. She hadn't an idea that, men being what they are, K would be a lot more interested in her because there was so much he could do for her. Any little gold-digger could have told her that it inflates any man's ego to do things for a girl—the bigger the things, the better he likes it. But Sandra was an independent little thing; she didn't like being an object of anybody's charity, K's least of all. It hurt her pride terribly, even while it filled her with gratitude that he could be so very kind and considerate about it.

He turned from the telephone just then.

"What size shoes and gloves?" he asked.

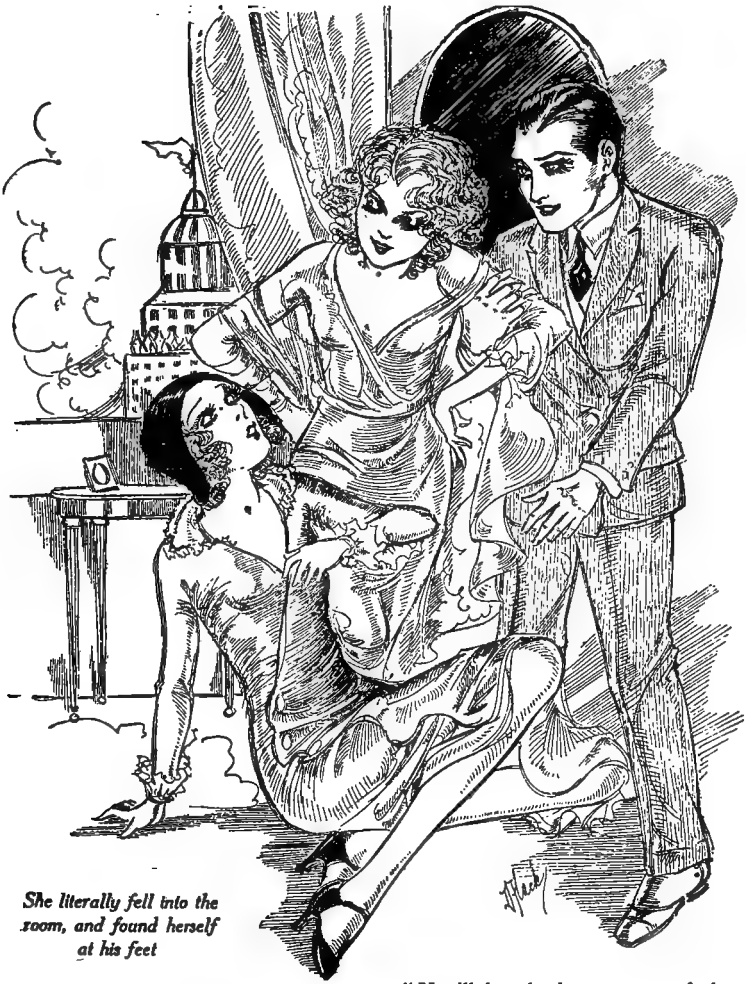
"One and a half, A shoes. Size five gloves," she managed.

K repeated it into the telephone, and came back to the breakfast table.

"There," he said, satisfaction radiating from him. "That's settled. Now, let's get a load of ammunition aboard, what?"

SANDRA was willing. The odor of the steaming food was almost more than she could bear. Lamb kidneys and scrambled eggs. Creamed potatoes. Toast and marmalade, and a huge pot of steaming coffee. When had food ever tasted so good?

Another knock on the door came just as they were finishing an almost



She literally fell into the room, and found herself at his feet

silent breakfast, and a boy came staggering in with boxes bigger than he was. K directed him to Sandra's bedroom, tipped him, and grinned at the girl.

"You'll knock the eye out of that casting director. Andrea sees to it that I pay the major part of the dividends for Bess Schlank—"

"A *Bess Schlank* costume!" gasped Sandra. "Oh—I couldn't!"

Bess Schlank dressed the stars. A Bess Schlank costume was way beyond her means. And she *had* to repay him! Had to!

"Please!" she breathed. "There are a lot of little shops around here where you can get p e r f e c t l y nice dresses for fifteen dollars—"

"I thought you said your big chance depended on your appearance," said K.

"It does," she admitted! "But—"

"No buts. Trot along in and array yourself. We've got to get you to the studio," he told her as if this were the most everyday matter in the world.

"I—I—" began Sandra, adoration and gratitude shining from her green eyes.

"Beat it," ordered K, with mock gruffness.

Sandra beat it. She slammed the door behind her with a sort of joyous sound. And she had that box open in a jiffy.

"Oh! Oh! *Oh!*" she gasped.

It didn't seem possible that a girl could dress in so little time, but Sandra couldn't wait to show herself to K in that outfit. It was of soft grayish-tan moiré silk, the shade called atmosphere. The dress was sleeveless and sleekly tailored. But the coat! It was of the same material, with a wide circular skirt and it was half covered with mink tails! One of those costumes she had admired in Bess Schlank's window without even hoping to know how she would look in it.

She was so busy admiring the costume that she never noticed herself. But K did. His eyes traveled from her suède-clad feet to her bronze-turbaned head, and then he said, under his breath:

"Jove! You're lovely!"

"It's the clothes," beamed Sandra. "That's my job—clothes horse. Oh, if the casting director could see me in an outfit like this—"

"Well, he's going to see you in it," said K, so gruffly that she caught her breath.

What was he so suddenly cross about? That blaze of glorious happiness died out of her green eyes. The slim, straight body sagged. The expressive little face quivered like a child's who has been unjustly snapped at—

"Hey there. Don't let it rain on that frock!" commanded K. "It'll probably spot. Do you think I want to deliver my masterpiece all mildewed?"

But he grinned as he said it, that heart-warming grin of his. And Sandra smiled back. Why, he was enjoying this! He really was! And he had said she was lovely. Suddenly she saw that he was laughing silently, just shaking with inward mirth. She had to know what he was laughing at! Had to!

"Andrea never will have the nerve to wear that outfit after she sees you in it," he told her in answer to her question. "And it was designed especially for her—"

"Who *is* Andrea?" asked Sandra jealously. She had to know that, too.

"She's a spoiled brat," said K. "But the apple of my eye, at that."

And *that* took all the sunshine out of the day for Sandra. Whoever Andrea was, K loved her. And that was the blackest tragedy to Sandra. Never could she forget his kindness, his understanding, his generosity. Never. Never could any other man seem so perfect to her. Never would she yearn for the comfort of any other man's arms the way she yearned already for K's again.

It would have been a silent trip to the studio if it hadn't been for K's

questions. He wanted to know all about her: what pictures she had worked in, why she could get such a good part as the one he remembered in one picture and then have to wait and wait for another chance, and so on. And Sandra answered all his questions, but she answered them absentmindedly.

She was wondering if fate could be so cruel as to cross her path with K's, and then take him away from her. She was wondering who Andrea might be—wife, fiancée, sister? And she was wondering what Andrea would say when she knew that her cherished costume had been worn by another girl before she had even seen it completed. But most of all she was wondering what the outcome of the day would be. Would K want to see her again? Or would he send her on her way when he had got the costume back for Andrea?

She was so concerned with her own affairs that she walked into the casting office, asked quietly—almost as if she were bored—for the casting director, and was ushered instantly through the guarded gate into the private sanctum. And there were at least a hundred people ahead of her!

It was the effect of that costume, of course! Even office boys are impressed by Bess Schlank costumes.

"Sandra Smith, eh? Oh, yes, I remember the bit you did in 'The Fire Bride.' Very well. This part is the same type, but much bigger . . . Now as to salary . . . Yes, Miss Smith, I think the part is yours—"

But before Sandra could open her mouth to ask about the contract—for you never are sure of a part in Hollywood until the contract is signed—the casting director went on:

"The star has the final word in the selection of all members of the cast, Miss Smith. As far as I'm concerned, you're in the picture. But come to-morrow, and *wear these same clothes,* for the final word."

THERE probably was more, but Sandra didn't hear it. All she could hear was the words, *wear these same clothes,* over and over. And if she did manage to scare up the nerve to ask K to let her wear them again, probably she would hear the same words again to-morrow, Hollywood being what it is.

And Andrea might turn up any minute, and refuse to let her wear the clothes! Oh, what would K think? Would he think she was trying to get that costume away from the hotel and never return it? And where would she go? She hadn't anything else to wear!

She dragged her way slowly back to the car where K was waiting for her. She hated to get there, even with K waiting.

"Never mind, young'un," he consoled her. "Better luck next time. Can't expect to get every part you try for."

"Oh, but I think I've got it," said Sandra mournfullly.

"Then why so droopy?" he asked.

"It's the clothes," she explained. "The clothes got me the casting director's approval, but the star has the final word. And the casting director told me to be sure to—*wear these same clothes when I came back to-morrow.*"

"Well," said K, "what's the matter with that?"

"You mean—but I haven't got anything else to wear. I can't get my own clothes till I pay my hotel bill, I thought, if they signed me to-day, I could get an advance on my salary—and—and—"

"Listen, Sandra. You're a nice

youngster and I like you. I'm going to pay your hotel bill and get you straightened out and—"

"Oh, please!" begged Sandra. "I can't bear it! I never have been an object of charity—"

"Well, what else can you think of?" countered K, just a little coldly, she thought.

"I thought—maybe—if I went to the cleaner about my dress—maybe it might not be really ruined—maybe he might pay for it—maybe if I gave my hotel ten dollars or so and told them I had a part coming up—"

There was so much shamefaced embarrassment about the girl that K wanted to take her in his arms, but she was standing outside the car, one foot on the running board.

"Get in, Sandra," he said gently. "We'll try your plan. I understand how this must hurt your pride, and I'll do everything I can to make it as easy as possible."

"Oh, thank you," she breathed. "You're *so* good!"

Maybe it was the costume that made the tailor so abject in his apologies, that made him insist that she accept twenty dollars for the ruined dress. For that is just what happened. And Sandra left that little shop a different girl. Just twenty dollars in real money did that to her. She went back to K with her head high, and assurance written all over her.

"Now where?" he asked, smiling.

"Let's go to my hotel and see how big fifteen dollars looks to them," smiled Sandra, happily. "That'll leave me five to eat on, and you'd be surprised how long it takes to eat up five dollars when you know how to make it last."

"I hope you won't spend any of it to-day," said K. "I haven't had my Thanksgiving turkey yet, and I was hoping you'd share it. Will you?"

"Do you really—*want*—me to?" she asked wistfully.

"More than anything in the world," he said with conviction.

And *that* brought the sunshine back into the day for Sandra.

NOT very long after that, Sandra came grinning out of her own little hotel, clad in her very best clothes. Her very own clothes, too, for fifteen dollars did look pretty big to that hotel manager. And she had the grand Bess Schlank costume in a box under her arm.

"How grand you look," K complimented her.

"In a sixteen-fifty suit — after a Bess Schlank outfit?" she asked deprecatingly.

"You'd look marvelous in anything," said K.

"Thank goodness I can wear the cheap little models," said Sandra. "I'll probably never own a Bess Schlank outfit if I live to be a million."

"You might," said K, with a manner and a tone that she thought were insinuating. In fact, she read so much into them that her thoughts sent a rosy blush over her face.

The rest of the day and that evening were sheer ecstasy to Sandra. They returned the Bess Schlank costume to the Roosevelt for safety, and then they went for a long ride, down to the sea and along the shore, for miles and miles. It was a heavenly bright day, sunshiny and warm. And when at last they were hungry, they turned the car and came back to their starting place.

They had a turkey dinner at the Roosevelt, and they danced. It was midnight before they reluctantly tore themselves away.

"I'll never be able to thank you—for everything," said Sandra, softly, starry-eyed, when they pulled up before her dingy little hotel. "Nobody ever in my life has been so good to me, so kind and considerate. It's been like—suddenly—meeting—God—"

She hadn't meant to say it. And when she heard her own words she was so embarrassed that she turned away and stumbled toward the door. And if she hadn't loved K already, she would have loved him for what he did then. He was out of the car and beside her in one great bound. And he had her in his arms.

"And finding you," he murmured, his arms about her and his lips against her béret, "is like having a dream of the perfect girl come to life in your arms. Sleep tight, little other half of this mutual admiration society, and come up for the Bess Schlank costume by nine-thirty in the morning. We might as well breakfast together, since I'm going to drive you to the studio. Will you?"

"Of course," she said, simply, lifting her face to be kissed.

But he didn't kiss her. And, contrarily enough, she loved him all the more for that. Any other man would have kissed her then and there. K just hugged her tight, gave her a brotherly little pat on the shoulder, and a gentle little push toward the dimly lighted doorway. And Sandra, the little minx, blew him a kiss from her fingertips just as she disappeared through the door.

She knew perfectly well why he hadn't kissed her, just as she knew that he wanted to. She was under such deep obligations to him that he didn't think it was fair. She might have submitted to his kisses whether they were welcome or not. And K wasn't the sort of a man to want kisses unless they are given to him wholeheartedly.

Sandra Smith did a joyous little dance around the room before she even took her hat off. Life was suddenly bright and rosy, after months and months of gloomy days. Life—why, life was perfect! She had K, and the prospect of a part that would end forever these long waits. And just because her luck had turned, she'd get that part. She was sure of it. And when K saw the picture, he would be proud of her. Making K proud of her, wiping out the shame of having him rescue her was the most important thing in the world.

Sandra's dreams that night were so pleasant that even in her sleep she smiled, and she awoke with a song on her lips.

BUT her happiness got a sharp jolt when she arrived at the door of room 1004 at the Roosevelt, at nine-thirty. Even out in the hall she could hear the voices. The girl's voice was shrill with rage. Andrea, of course!

"I tell you, I won't have it! I've planned that ensemble for months! I've been waiting for months to get back here because Bess Schlank is the only person who could make it the way I wanted it. And I won't have some cheap girl you've picked up somewhere wearing it. I don't care if your money did pay for it. It's mine, I tell you. Mine! And nobody but me could wear it right—"

"You wouldn't say that if you had seen Sandra in it," said K.

"Sandra! Sandra! Sandra!" shrilled the girl. "I'm sick of hearing it!"

"You'd better not be," said K. "You'll probably be hearing it the rest of your life."

"I will not! I know how to handle these little gold-diggers. The minute I turn my back on you, you're involved with one of them. You ought to be ashamed, K. All any of them want is your money—"

Sandra suddenly went hot with rage at that. Fancy caring whether K had any money or not! Why, anybody would love him! Who could help it?

"Well, Sandra can have it," said K, curtly. "And she's anything but a gold-digger. I offered to pay her hotel bill, and she wouldn't have it—even when she didn't know where she was going to sleep—"

"Applesauce! All applesauce! She was just lining you up for a good cleaning," scoffed Andrea.

"That's enough!" snapped K. "Give me those clothes. You can have half a dozen outfits to make up for it. I tell you, the girl's career depends on her getting that job—"

Sandra didn't know whether she liked that or not. Pictures wasn't the career she wanted — now. And she didn't want K to think her picture career was more important than—being his wife, either.

"No!" screamed Andrea.

"All right," said K. "That job she wants doesn't matter. I was going to wait until she had finished the picture, until she was on her feet again by her own efforts. But under the circumstances, I'll marry her to-day. Then I can buy her all the Bess Schlank dresses she wants."

Sandra, overcome with the suddenness of it, slumped against the door—and the door flew open, pitching her head-foremost into the room.

"I—*beg*—your pardon," she stammered, sitting most informally on the floor. "I didn't—I mean—"

"That's what they call a comedy-entrance, center stage," chortled K. "Isn't it? How are you, darling? Sleep well?"

And then he was lifting her to her feet, beaming down at her, turning her to face—Andrea, who was standing belligerently in the center of the room.

"My sister Andrea, Sandra—having one of her morning tantrums. She's dying to meet you," said K.

Sandra was speechless. After what she had overheard, she hadn't an idea what to say, nor whether to say anything at all or not. She could only stand there, with K's arm about her, her big green eyes wide with trepidation, waiting.

And then a whirlwind engulfed her. Andrea flung herself upon her, flung bare young arms from which the kimono sleeves had slipped back—about her neck.

"Of course I'm dying to meet you, Sandra! K's crazy about you! And anybody K is crazy about—I'm crazy about, too. Come on in and take your hat off. We've ordered breakfast for three, and it'll be along in a minute!"

"But I can't—I heard—you don't want me—" stammered Sandra, near to tears of bewilderment.

"Oh, I didn't mean a word of it!" cried Andrea. "And you came too soon that's all. I was just getting ready to make K bribe me to give you that ensemble. Please! If you overheard all that, do forgive me. You see—"

Andrea had dragged Sandra into her own bedroom by that time, and now she lowered her voice to a whisper—

"You see, I went and got myself engaged to a man K doesn't approve of, and I wasn't going to tell him. I was going to make him give his consent—I wasn't going to give you the dress till he did. And he's so crazy

about you, he'd even give me that see?"

Sandra could only gasp. K had said she was "a spoiled brat." She certainly was!

"Come on! Let's see you in the famous ensemble!" urged Andrea. "Get it on, and go out there and let him propose to you. He might as well get it out of his system. He's talked of nothing else ever since he got home last night— And you'd better be a darned good wife to him, Sandra Smith—"

"If ever a girl had a right to say, 'This is so sudden!'" gasped Sandra, a little later, in K's arms, "I'm that girl."

"But what else are you going to say?" asked K urgently, his lips finding her eyes, her forehead, her hair.

"Whatever you want me to," murmured Sandra, lifting lips that he didn't refuse this time.

"Oh, darling! Darling!" sighed K. "It's been the longest night I ever lived through. And it takes three whole endless days to get married in California—"

The bedroom door flew open at that. Andrea had been listening.

"See if Sandra cares," piped up K's impudent sister. "It'll take longer than that to get a gorgeous trousseau together—"

"We could go down to Tia Juana—" whispered Sandra radiantly.

"Will you?" begged K.

"Of course," said Sandra.

And they did. That very day. After all the disasters it had taken to bring them together, K was afraid to wait any longer. Fate, the tricky jade, intended them to belong to each other, and they were afraid that any delay in the marriage might anger her.

And only two days ago, Sandra had thought that this was one Thanksgiving season when she couldn't find a thing to be thankful for!

THE BARRIER

OH, all the things you said to me (now that we are apart),
They haunt my sleep like winged things—your tender, laughing words—
They strive to ease my pain for you and flutter at my heart,
To seek a happy resting place, like weary homing birds.

I fain would make them welcome, and I fain would bid them stay,
Those lovely words I thrilled to hear in times that long have fled.
Alas! they cannot enter now, for something bars the way;
A blood-stained sword is in my heart—*the word you left unsaid!*

—*Faith Baldwin*

In the blinding glow of the steamer's searchlight the castaways stood revealed

Midnight Madness

By I. BAIRD RICHARDS

"OF course, Caris Doyle is husband hunting since her father died and everybody found out it was just as well that he did shoot himself, but I do think her frightfully lacking in taste to try to keep up with the old crowd! She is practically a beggar now, and how she expects to do it is more than I know."

Nina Dillon's high thin voice floated up to Carissa Doyle just as the latter emerged from her room. The girl paused on the deep overhanging balcony which circled the interior of the Dillon lodge on one of the San Juan Islands.

"What's the matter, Nina," teased Dicky Westgate, "afraid she'll tie a blue ribbon around the neck of your favorite lion or something?"

Carissa, small and raven haired, with the iris of her golden brown eyes flecked with black, shrank deep within the concealing shadow. The delicate color under the odd fascinating curve of her cheek flamed and spread over her clear olive face. One slender hand pressed hard against her vivid mouth to still the cry of protest that rose to her lips.

Nina Dillon, the one girl out of the old crowd Carissa thought had remained loyal after the tragic disgrace

that had befallen her, to speak that way, to think that way of her!

"But why did you ask her?" pursued Dicky's lazy voice.

"I didn't, smarty," Nina pouted, "mother did! And furthermore, if she or any other girl can grab a man from me, I don't want him! I am not being catty, I just don't understand how she can want to go on as if nothing had happened—"

"Take warning, Brinker, and don't freeze to the stick when Caris Doyle arrives, unless you don't care what kind of a label Nina puts on you," Dicky chuckled maliciously.

"Careless Doyle! Who is she, and what made her that way?" drawled an unfamiliar voice.

A roar of laughter greeted the question.

"O—oh," shrieked Nina, "isn't that just too delicious! Careless Doyle! Describes her dad, too; he was careless with other people's money!"

THE color drained from Caris's pert lovely little face. She had been on a cattle ranch once, and they told her that cattle always stamped to death a wounded member of the herd. She had cringed with the horror of it then. Now, she told herself grimly, she knew how the stricken animals must have felt.

The strange voice that had evolved the cruel nickname from the unhappy combination of sounds, belonged then to Tod Brinker! She had seen a hydroplane, presumably his, tied up at the tiny wharf when she arrived but a short time ago in the Dillon launch, which plied between the island and the mainland.

No one had met her. At the house they had said the young people were all out hiking, and bade her make herself at home. Before Carissa had got out of her short leopard skin sports coat, however, they had returned. Nina was still in ignorance of her arrival.

She again opened the door and slipped within the sanctuary of the bedroom. Flinging herself down upon the bed, she bit hard into the back of one small hand to stifle her sobs.

Dubbed Careless Doyle by Tod Brinker! Daddy, daddy! She couldn't bear it. It would cling forever! Bitterly she visioned the unending stigma. And she had only ventured out of her seclusion at Mrs. Dillon's urgent invitation, because Tod Brinker was to be there! The irony of it, the searing humiliation!

Nina's father was part owner of an aëroplane factory in Seattle, and Tod Brinker had recently accepted an important position on its advisory board. That was how he came to be at the midwinter house party. His fame as a daring aviator had penetrated every corner of the civilized world.

To Caris he had been an idol, comparable only to Colonel Lindbergh or Admiral Byrd.

Suddenly she sat up, dry-eyed. She couldn't face them after this! She would slip out and down the back stairs. They need never know she had come at all. The servant who had shown her to the room would doubtless fail to mention her arrival.

Pride flamed high in her heart. Never would she let them know the depths of bitter humiliation to which their idle chatter had reduced her.

In the act of pulling a soft green felt over thick glossy hair, she paused. Running away! The thing her daddy had always warned her was in the blood. The Doyles weren't cowards, he said, but they hated inharmony to the extent of always fleeing if flight

were possible. Her throat worked painfully. Daddy had run true to form. Had run away from something he hadn't really done! To save her worse grief, he had said. That final gallant gesture of his had all but killed her.

Slowly the color returned to her cheeks. Very well, she would carry on, would not run away from anything! The world should be made to pay for robbing her of her father, for this thoughtless cruelty to his daughter.

And most of all, Tod Brinker would be made to pay!

Jerking off the hat, she smoothed her shining hair, parted in the center and drawn back to a soft knot at the nape of the neck. Presently, in a fetching green sports frock banded with violet, she stepped out upon the balcony again and closed the door with a bang. She descended the broad stairs, head held high, small chin forward thrust at a defiant angle.

Reaching the bottom step she stood for a moment before moving on to join the group about the great fireplace.

Dicky Westgate, rising to get a light for his cigarette, saw her first. He spoke to Nina in a guarded tone. Nina twisted on the low divan where she was seated beside a lean blue-eyed youth whose blond hair curled all over his head despite an obvious effort to make it lie straight. She stared at Caris. Then getting up she minced toward her with outstretched hands, her pale blue eyes wide with surprise.

"Why, darling," cooed Nina, "when did you arrive?"

A guilty silence hovered over the room as the young men all politely lounged to their feet.

"While you were all out hiking," Caris replied indifferently, "and I fell asleep waiting. Hello, everybody!" She smiled with stiff lips, though her tone was casual as she strolled forward.

The silence was broken by a relieved chorus as they crowded about her. Then Caris found herself gazing up into the blue eyes of the young man who had sat beside Nina.

"Carissa Doyle," murmured Nina negligently, as if deliberately rude.

Caris gave him her most special smile, though her heart was beating at a thunderous rate. The one chap in the world who had ever stirred her imagination! Her knees felt weak, inadequate. How different from the meeting she had always dreamed might happen! She told herself she hated him now.

"Yes, I am Caris — Caris Doyle," she slurred her name to make it sound as he had spoken it a little while back. "But Nina has neglected to mention who you are!"

"Why," stammered the young man, his rugged wind-tanned face aflame, his embarrassed eyes pleading a mute forgiveness, "my name is Brinker."

"Don't be dumb, Caris," chided Nina. "This is Tod Brinker, of course!"

"How careless of me!" murmured Caris, her golden eyes filled with mocking contrition. Pointedly she turned her back upon him as she strolled to another group nearer the fire.

DINNER was over, and in the great living room the gay party danced to the radio. Caris, in a pale yellow gown of transparent velvet, avoided Tod Brinker as if he had the plague. With her sleek dark head a vivid contrast to the yellow of the

dress, she resembled a lovely black-eyed susan.

But her heart was heavy within, her brilliant smiles purely mechanical, for the girls of the crowd were following Nina's lead—cutting her because of her father's tragic failure! Now and then she would catch them exchanging knowing glances, snickering behind her back. She bitterly regretted her decision to brazen it out. She was helpless against them all, sick with despair.

In her heart she blamed Tod Brinker. He had been responsible for the ridicule. Each time she saw him start in her direction she disappeared, or immediately danced with some one else. At length, however, she was dancing with Dicky when he tapped her partner on the shoulder. Caris frowned a slight negative to Dicky which he declined to heed.

"Sorry, old thing," he whispered in her ear, "but I promised Brinker I'd observe the law the next time I danced with you, and he leaped out from the stag line—"

With that Caris found herself in Tod Brinker's arm, moving in perfect rhythm to his step. Despite her anger, she was strangely elated that they danced together so beautifully. In silence they circled the room, Caris light as thistledown in his arms, lids downcast, with the dark curling lashes making half-moons on the curve of her cheek. Then as she felt his arm tighten about her, the ready color deepened under the olive skin. Breathing became difficult. Something soft and fuzzy lodged in her throat.

Angrily she bit her lips. It infuriated her that his mere physical presence had this power to rouse her, to make her realize her weakness.

"Won't you forgive me?" his deep voice begged in her ear. "You see, I thought it was a nickname they had given some one—I am sorrier than I can make you know!"

Sorrier! He pitied her, he dared pity her?

"I am quite able to manage without any one's pity—yours least of all!" she blazed.

"Don't misunderstand me," he corrected, "I was rude. I want your forgiveness. I would do anything to obtain it!"

Anything! Her heart leaped to her throat.

"Do you mean that?" she demanded quietly.

For a long moment his earnest blue gaze locked with her golden-brown one. It was Caris who looked away first.

"Absolutely," he replied.

A daring plan formulated in her small sleek head. Tod Brinker had never taken a girl up in his plane, though girls all over the world had sought to break his self-appointed rule. Galahad of the air, the papers had called him.

If he were sufficiently in earnest now to break that rule, she would have all the revenge she desired!

"If I thought you meant it—" she began, her shining eyes raised to his with eager wonder, "but of course, it is merely a nice exaggeration—" The heavy lids lowered again, shutting him out as definitely as would a closing door.

He stopped dancing and drew her over under the balcony.

"I am not joking," he insisted, "what were you going to say?"

"Well," Caris studied the toe of one of her yellow satin slippers, "you see—" she suddenly found it difficult to keep her rosebud mouth from trem-

bling, "if I had a way of getting back to town to-night it would be rather wonderful—I—it is unpleasant to be an unwelcome—guest—" She raised her gaze to meet his and heard his quickly indrawn breath as he searched her small face.

Caris held her own breath as she waited his decision, fearful lest he read something of what was in her mind. Already she was picturing Nina's rage—when she knew. But her heart sank as she saw doubt cloud his clear blue eyes. Against her will tears trembled on her inky lashes.

Before he could frame a refusal she spoke. "Don't bother to refuse—I had no right to suggest something the whole world knows you would not care to do!" She turned blindly away, but he laid a lean detaining hand upon her slim round arm. His touch sent a shiver of delight along her veins.

"It isn't that!" he denied in a troubled voice. "I would do even that under the circumstances. I, too, should want to leave. But you see, on the way over this afternoon the engine gave me a little trouble. It's a new type of motor I am testing—I hesitated because of that—"

"Oh," gasped Carissa, her small ebon head reared in pride, "don't add insult to injury! I quite understand—I shouldn't have suggested such a thing if I had thought a second time—" She shrugged free from his hand, but he towered over her in sudden anger.

His blue eyes blazed down into her furious brown ones.

"Listen, young lady," he said, "I am telling you the truth! But since you choose to doubt it—if you want to risk it I will do as you wish—I will take you!"

They measured each other in hot silence for an instant, then Caris shrugged. "Agreed," she said. Her smile was insolent.

A BRILLIANT moon shone down through the clear frosty night. It smothered the earth in a coat of silver mail. Bundled in her leopard skin jacket, with leather helmet and goggles, Caris gazed upon the world beneath from the passenger's cockpit in Tod Brinker's hydroplane. They were skimming over the water now, and she was happier than she had been for ages. It seemed as if all of her life had been a preparation for this silver winging through midnight skies with Tod Brinker. This mad escapade was just the tonic necessary to her wounded spirit.

They had agreed it would be better for Caris to leave a note accounting for her disappearance, thus avoiding unhappy explanations. After the others had turned in for the night, the two dark conspirators had slipped out of the wide rustic front door. Since doors were never locked at the Dillon lodge, the problem of reëntering when he returned did not bother young Brinker.

The islands of the San Juan group were slipping by like dark jewels in a bright setting. Suddenly Caris was conscious of a sputtering in the engine, a staccato halting that even to her uninstructed ear meant but one thing—a failing motor. Her heart, too, seemed to fail. If the motor stopped altogether it would be her fault for insisting. That thought sent a chill along her spine. She knew he had been telling the truth about the engine, even before they started, but she had been too stubborn to admit it to herself!

She realized the plane was circling back toward the last tiny dot of an island that all at once seemed to have

slipped far into the distance behind them. The motor had stopped! With a sinking sensation in the pit of her stomach she saw that they were settling down upon the water with a great splashing of spray, like a giant bird dipping in its bath.

The beach ahead shone stark and white in the cold moonlight. The ship, with the very slightest jar imaginable, eased up on the sandy shore and came to a stop just inside the last line of white plumed breakers.

Young Brinker leaped out and waded ashore, carrying a long anchor line which he made fast about a huge bowlder above the tide line. Then he came back with arms raised to Caris.

"Here's where we begin the romantic desert island act, at the end of which the heroine swoons in the hero's arms!" His tone was cold-clipped with fury.

Carissa had peeled off her helmet and her straight glossy hair cascaded down her back like a flow of ebony. His words stung like a lash.

"Well," she retorted, "at least we won't start it that way!" Skillfully avoiding his arms, she slid over the edge of the cockpit and landed in the water. In defiance she sloughed ahead of him to the beach.

"That was stupidly unnecessary!" he exclaimed in annoyance.

She wheeled toward him with rage as deep as his own clouding her luminous dark eyes. "I suppose," she taunted, "you are being big and brave and strong not to tell me, 'I told you so!' But go ahead and say it, I don't care!" Her tone mounted recklessly. "I am just Careless Doyle! Careless of what I do or of what people think! I don't care what you think of me any more than I care whether you lose your Galahad reputation because you are marooned on a deserted island with me!"

Impersonally Caris heard herself shouting at him like a fishwife. It made her sick with shame. Her teeth were chattering with the cold.

"Oh," she moaned, "it is all your fault—if you hadn't given me that horrible nickname before them all—you have to hurt people to be clever! I — I — hate you!" Her voice broke treacherously.

Utterly desolate, she whirled and sped up the beach, choking back the bitter sobs. Not for the world should he know he had made her cry. She stumbled on with head down facing the breeze, not caring whether she lived or died.

Before she had circled the tiny island which was nothing more than a huge rock jutting out of the straits, she saw the light of Tod's bonfire leaping to the sky. She turned back on her trail, perversely ignoring its proffered comfort, her sodden shoes slipping miserably with each step.

ON the return trip she met him in search of her.

"I am sorry." He stopped with arms folded. "I am mad at myself, not you. I knew better than to attempt a night flight with that balky engine. There is no help for it, I fear, as it is frozen too hard—besides, I was not thinking about myself—"

Caris lifted her small lovely face to his. In the moonlight it looked very white and tragic.

His wide, sensitive mouth was set in firm lines as if the apology came hard. "It doesn't matter about me—" she choked. "Nothing matters since—well—since my father—" She swallowed hard and then continued wearily, "I am sorry I was such a shrew—"

"I don't blame you!" he interrupted, "it is bad enough to have me stall you here, without having me such a bigoted idiot! But let's get back to the fire—I am not going to let you freeze." Placing a protective arm about her slim shoulders he led her toward the bonfire.

He made her sit on a gray drift log near the comforting heat while he removed her wet shoes and placed them to dry. His tenderness shamed her. Even though it was only pity, her bitterness could not hold out against it. Suddenly it became imperative to confess. She hated herself. To think that her own cheap motive had got them into this predicament!

"I could—have stood Nina—I could have left when I first heard you all," her tone was hurried, "but I wanted to get even. Then, when you seemed sorry—I traded on your decency. I wanted to be the first girl you took up in your plane—it was to punish Nina—punish all the girls who followed her lead. But it was vanity on my part, too, I wanted to be the first—" Her voice died away. Miserably she knew that never again could she be happy unless he forgave her.

He had risen and stood facing her, his friendly eyes grown suddenly hard. "I see—" he said slowly, with a low, reckless laugh.

Caris's heart sank to a new level of despair. He wouldn't forgive her then! Well, never mind, she had tried.

"I suppose you realize you are in for some scarehead publicity?" he inquired a moment later, formally as one speaks to a stranger. "Had you thought of that?"

She was startled. "It doesn't matter about me!" All at once, however, it struck her like a blow beneath the belt what those headlines might mean to him. It was common knowledge that Tod Brinker loathed publicity. Gossip had it that when he did take a girl up in his plane it would doubtless be the girl he intended to marry.

"Oh," her voice was frightened, "I didn't realize what it might mean for you!"

He shrugged as he turned back toward the fire, piling it higher with beach wood. The flames reflected upon his bronzed young face, however, betraying his deep concern.

For a long time they both stared in silence out upon the darkening water. The moon had sunk over the distant horizon, and night wrapped them about with its brooding shroud. Now and then Caris dabbed furtively at the tears she could not control.

A pinpoint of light appeared far out. It drew closer.

"A steamer going out of the straits," said Tod a little later. "If it comes near enough I could signal an S. O. S. with my jacket in front of the fire. No telling where they are bound, but we will have to be rescued sooner or later—the plane will never take us off! I guess we can't be choosy about where the steamer might happen to be going!" he finished grimly.

"No," Caris agreed in a lifeless tone; "no, we can't be choosy."

As in a dream she watched the light grow larger until the outlines of a great steamer were clearly visible. Presently Tod peeled off his leather coat and stood at one side of the blaze which he had allowed to die down a bit. With detached interest she watched his lean, supple figure in the dark flying togs as he bent to his task. Deftly he flipped the coat across the light in a series of dots and dashes. Over and over he repeated the same signals.

As the liner drew abreast, he moved with it, always keeping between it and the fire. Then suddenly, like a seeking finger, a searchlight shot out from the steamer, circled about and came to rest upon them.

"Well, that's over!" he exclaimed fervently.

To hide her eyes from him, Caris busied herself with her shoes which were now dry. It broke over her with relentless clarity that she was sorry they were being rescued. Tod Brinker would always hate her. He could never forgive her for this humiliating adventure. Never again would she have him all to herself. All at once, nothing mattered but being near him—

"They are waiting for you to say 'yes,'" he prompted. Carissa's lips felt frozen

THE steamer was standing by and a small boat was being lowered. Fascinated as if it were doom instead of rescue, she watched it draw near. The plane was now beached above the tide and young Brinker went out to get her small overnight case. Then he came back and took her arm. They started toward the shore. At the edge of the water Tod gathered her in his arms. "You are not to get wet again," he insisted impersonally as he waded out to meet the boat. The blood pulsed in Carissa's throat with the beat of thunderous music, like a multitude of gay dancing feet. She held her breath lest he hear it above the wash of the tide.

Then he slipped on a hidden rock and all but lost his balance. Involuntarily her arms flew to circle his throat. As he righted himself his cheek jerked

against hers. He stopped for an instant, the icy water swirling knee deep about his lithe, muscular legs, but his face remained pressed against hers. Caris was powerless to move away from the sweet magic of his nearness. She could feel his arms tremble as they held her. Then slowly his face turned and his lips found hers. His arms tightened hungrily about her, and her heart seemed to leap to her lips, there to become forever his. For a long moment they were oblivious of the chilling water, of the cold night about them.

Caris, aware that the men in the boat were shouting at them, drew back with a little involuntary gasp of pain. The effort left her trembling. Tod, with a shake of his head as if clearing his vision, strode toward them.

Caris felt herself lifted in by alien hands, saw them drag the young aviator over the side. Almost at once it seemed they were being helped up the rope ladder of the steamer.

On deck the captain greeted them with grave courtesy, Captain Breen of the Ruth Darnley bound for San Francisco, he informed them. At his side stood a bright-eyed individual with a prominent nose and rather informal attire, as if he had got up hurriedly. The man peered at Tod with a searching, intent gaze.

Briefly Tod explained the circumstances.

"But your name, sir, and that of the young lady?" the captain suggested.

In the half light Caris saw that Tod flushed as he murmured, "Brinker is my name, and Miss Doyle is the young woman."

The large nosed man stepped forward, grasping Tod's hand. "Well, well!" he exclaimed, "I am Jackson of the *News-Republic!* I thought I should have recognized you, Mr. Brinker. Tod Brinker, of course! And with a young lady! Well, well, captain, this is a bit of rare news! My paper will pay for my vacation for this scoop. 'Tod Brinker wrecks plane with fiancée aboard,'" he softly intoned, rubbing his plump hands together in obvious satisfaction. "You know he has always vowed that the first time he took a girl up with him it would be the dame he expected to marry!" He spoke to the captain, but turned to Caris, whose small delicate face had grown crimson.

She dropped her heavy lids to shut out the glow of secret joy his colossal error had created. That kiss still burned on her lips. To be engaged to Tod Brinker! To be loved by him!

"I congratulate you, young lady," said the reporter; "you are destined to be more envied than if you were a princess!"

"Oh," gasped Carissa, frightened, as she realized she had to put him right for Tod's sake; "you are greatly mistaken—I met Mr. Brinker for the first time last night. You see how ridiculous—"

"Now, now, my dear, if you weren't blushing like the very picture of guilt, you might make me believe you!" He wagged a playful finger at her.

Caris raised embarrassed eyes to Tod. She could feel his hand upon her arm through the sleeve of her coat. His fingers suddenly contracted in a warning pressure, his eyes held a peculiar blue gleam. Had she said the wrong thing? What did it all mean? Would he rather have them believe he was engaged to her than to shatter the romance which clung to his name? Galahad of the air!

"Ah," continued the newspaper

man, "all the more romantic! 'Galahad of Air Elopes With Girl After First Meeting!'" He licked his lips appreciatively over the news morsel. Then his eyes bulged with a new idea. "I have it, captain! These young folks want to get married. Why not perform the ceremony for them when we get beyond the three mile limit!"

The captain bent an incredulous gaze upon Tod. "I trust this gentleman is not presuming too far—" His tone was hesitant as if he too were intrigued by the romance suggested.

Tod cleared his throat. "Well, that is— Naturally I do not wish to confirm anything Miss Doyle has denied. But our future plans rest entirely with her."

The blood rushed to Caris's ears with a deafening roar. Had she suddenly gone mad, suddenly begun to hear things! Had he fallen in love with her? The world spun dizzily with the glory of that enchanting vista. Then she met his gaze.

His young face was a study in impassivity. Only his eyes gave him away. They held laughter, not tenderness. They were daring her to accept the challenge fate had cast at their feet. This was his punishment for her because of the predicament she had got him in. He was going to let her get out of it as best she could!

A PICTURE of Nina's chagrin if this mad, impossible idea were carried to a finish, flashed through Carissa's mind. If he were really daring her to do it, never could a girl have sweeter revenge. Just to be called Tod Brinker's wife!

After all, she had started out for revenge. No use forgetting that! No use getting her heart all tangled up. But underneath, she admitted that was just what had happened, knew she would gamble recklessly with the last breath in her slim young body if Tod Brinker held the stakes.

His hand trembled upon her arm. Was it so hard for him to control his laughter? He still dared laugh at her! Of course he didn't want it to go on. He didn't mean that — he was just playing with her as a cat does with a mouse. He meant her never to forget that she had dared and partially succeeded where other girls had failed!

Swift fury darkened her eyes. Very well! Let him make the embarrassing denials if he wanted them made. She would turn the tables by pretending it was true! Let him squirm out of it. It didn't matter what the papers said of her. They'd say plenty, after all the things they had said about dad—ugly, untrue things. Nothing mattered very much any more.

Her scarlet lips curved in a proud smile. "Well," her voice sounded choked and thick in her ears; "well, when people elope they usually try to get married as soon as possible—" The deck seemed to heave under her feet. After the words were said a rushing silence filled the air, a silence like the beating of great wings.

"Ha, captain!" the reporter sniggered. "You see I was right! By sunrise we should be out where you are the vested power these young people need!"

"I shall be very happy to be of service," the captain gravely consented, his piercing gray eyes seeming to search into her very soul.

"Thank you, sir! At sunrise, then, as this gentleman suggests," returned Tod in a firm, level voice. Caris wondered whether she was asleep, in the throes of a strange dream from which she would presently awaken.

"Could you by any chance be the daughter of Monty Doyle?" probed the captain, still gazing at her.

"Yes," she bitterly assented. "Why do you ask?"

The captain's face brightened. "He was my very dear friend—I should indeed be happy to see his daughter united in holy wedlock with Tod Brinker. I loved him."

The girl's heart warmed. Tears crowded to her lovely golden-brown eyes. "Then you could never believe the terrible things they said of him?" She hung upon his answer.

"Never! He was the soul of honor. I don't know why he did — what he did—but he was no thief!"

"Ah, thank you," breathed Caris gratefully. "You see he thought it would do no good to try to convince the world—but they tricked him into using money that was not his. He thought he was doing it to save a friend—the money was merely to pass through this man's hands for a period of twenty-four hours, then be restored where it belonged. It was a ruse to ruin father. He couldn't endure the disgrace, the shame for the one who betrayed him!" The comfort of meeting some one who knew her beloved father stirred her profoundly. It helped, too, that Tod Brinker should hear her defense of her father, hear this estimate of him from a man such as Captain Breen.

"Come with me," urged the captain; "you shall occupy my quarters until after the ceremony." And Carissa, like an automaton, allowed him to lead her away.

A BRIGHT red sun streaking over the mountains from the west, a crimson band of glory over the mirrored surface of the water. Carissa held her breath. A stewardess had come to tell her the gentlemen were waiting on the bridge.

"And it's honored you are, miss, for Captain Breen never permits it."

Caris's thoughts swirled about like helpless leaves in a wintry blast. Would Tod Brinker let this farce go on? Would he really marry a girl he did not love just to punish her for making him ridiculous? To have him less than the gallant knight of her dreams, that made a hurt in her breast like a cruel knife twisting.

At the foot of the ladder to the bridge the newspaper man met her.

"You leave it to me, miss, I'm going into that story about your father," he whispered. "I'll clear it up!" Caris's lips, so like the scarlet petals of a flower, trembled. She wanted to thank him, tell him that any one who could marry her to Tod Brinker could also magically clear her father's name.

The captain, in a blue mackinaw buttoned high under his chin, held a small black bound book in one hand. Her knees buckled weakly. Was it possible that she was about to be married to Tod Brinker? Surely he would say the word that would stop wild pretense! She lifted her deep, lovely eyes, wide, frightened eyes, to his. Lithe and bronzed he stood there, a romantic figure in his familiar flying togs. He was bareheaded. The stiff breeze flattened down his unruly blond hair into tangled curls.

His gaze held hers, tossed it back with a mocking challenge. He had no intention of stopping it! She knew that now. It was up to her.

The blood surged again into Carissa's throat, spread to the edges of her silken black hair under the rakish green felt. The red glow of the rising sun trailed negligent golden fingers across

the sky, across the water, resting them idly on the faces of the youth and maid playing such a reckless game with each other.

"You are ready, Mr. Brinker?" Captain Breen's voice reached her like a far-away call from the hills.

"Yes, sir!" That was Tod answering in deep rich tones, a little husky with defiance.

It couldn't be real! It couldn't be happening!

But it was.

The captain had begun to read from the tiny book. The wind caught his words and tossed them about, making for the most part a senseless jumble to Caris. Once Tod said, "yes," in a firm, level voice. Then the captain repeated his meaningless jargon to her. After that they both seemed queerly to wait for her to speak.

With stiff lips she tried to fashion words that would end this madness, this mockery of a wedding. The words refused to come.

The reporter nudged her, whispered in her ear. "They are waiting for you to say 'yes,'" he prompted.

"Yes?" she echoed stupidly. That seemed to satisfy them, for the captain beamed benignly, and Caris's staring eyes read the words on his lips, rather than heard them vibrate thinly for an instant before the wind whipped them out into the reaches of silence:

"I now pronounce you man and wife!"

Man and wife! They meant Tod and her! Magic words with no meaning.

Tod drew her within the circle of his arm. His lips sought hers, but Caris turned her head. She couldn't bear to pretend it was real!

In the distance another steamer loomed upon the horizon.

"Carissa, I hope you won't mind going back to Seattle at once," Tod's voice was strangely repressed as he released her. "You see Captain Breen says under the circumstances we can change to the other boat in mid ocean. It is calm enough, and since both are of the Darnley line, the other captain will not mind, he thinks. You have no luggage, and I should attend to the rescue of the plane— Then we can make necessary arrangements—"

She nodded her head, drawing the smart leopard skin coat close against the wind which stung her eyes, but which at the same time whipped the tears away.

THE following hours were crammed with bewildering emotions for Caris. How would it end? Why had Tod Brinker tangled up their lives in this extraordinary fashion? When they had made the transfer from the Ruth Darnley to the Emma Darnley, bound for Seattle, she had gone directly to a stateroom where Tod had said she might at least rest until they reached Seattle. Finally, despite the turmoil of her thoughts, she did fall into an uneasy sleep.

The change in the speed of the engines finally wakened her when the liner was nearing the docks in Seattle. Peering out through the portholes she could see the bluffs of West Seattle slipping past. By the time she had twisted her silky ebon hair into its knot at the nape of her milk white neck, and brushed her pert little nose with powder from a tiny inlaid compact, she realized that the ship had docked.

Going up on the A deck, she was seized with a strange panic. Where was Tod? What if he didn't come near her? What if this were a part of his plan to make her suffer? Her hus-

band! That thought sent the hot color swirling to her beautiful cheeks. It shook her inwardly like a beating gale. If he but loved her—mustn't think of that, though; mustn't forget how all of this had happened. She leaned against the rail for support. He would come for her presently. Of course. He wanted everything to be quiet, to avoid all publicity.

Then she felt a touch on her arm. Tod! Her heart leaped to her throat. She wheeled to face him. For an instant she stared stupidly at the white-coated steward who with a respectful gesture toward his cap handed her a note.

With trembling fingers she took it, opened it.

There was no salutation.

> It will be best for us to separate. There will be less publicity this way.
>
> T.

The words danced a crazy jig before her eyes. She tried to laugh, a harsh, bitter laugh that caught in her throat. She deserved this. No use to whine! Have to take it standing! Any one cheap enough to make a mockery of the most sacred ritual in the world should have expected it. For the first time she admitted that an impossible hope had buoyed her thus far. Underneath had been a desperate prayer that through some divine miracle Tod Brinker had wanted to marry her. Not for any sane reason, but because it became adventure, the great adventure for him who so loved adventure! She winked hard to banish hopeless tears.

On the wharf handkerchiefs were beginning to flutter. Whistles blew. The ship's band played a gay tune.

Suddenly her attention focused. Through a swimming vision she made out a girl standing beside a stubby, dark complexioned youth. Nina and Dicky Westgate! What were they doing here?

Carissa wanted to run, to hide her despair from the world. *The Doyles always run away!* Those words jeered at her. Stifling the impulse, she walked head up down the gangplank straight into the waiting arms of her old crowd.

Only now they did seem like the old crowd. Eagerly the girls kissed her with little squeals of delight. The men tried it, too.

"Got to expect it, this once," said Dicky; "got to kiss the bride. It's done, you know!"

"But where's Tod?" curiously demanded Nina, her petulant little face charmingly framed by wisps of golden curls, over which was drawn a bewitching black felt. Her pale blue eyes were almost black with repressed fury.

"Tod?" echoed Caris uncertainly, her cheeks aflame.

"Yes, Tod," cried one of the others, "don't you think we can read?" They held an early edition of the *News-Republic* out for her inspection.

There it was, sprawled across the page in headlines that seemed a foot high.

> **GALAHAD'S WINGS CLIPPED. TOD BRINKER ELOPES WITH CARISSA DOYLE. MARRIED AT SUNRISE ABOARD SS. RUTH DARNLEY**

Underneath, in smaller type, it stated that the couple were to return to Seattle that day on the Emma Darnley.

CARISSA lifted frightened eyes. She understood then how a girl might feel who had been deserted at the altar. Even though this had been a mad escapade, Tod was shirk-

ing his part of it. He should have been sporting enough to see it through to some kind of a finish. In that instant she hated him.

Over the heads of her friends she could see the black box of a camera focused directly upon her. She lowered her head. Oh, the shame of it! The utter degradation!

"You know how newspapers get things wrong!" she parried in a feeble effort to save her pride in the future. "Tod tried to bring me back to Seattle and the plane broke and a steamer picked us up—but—" She stopped short. Nina seized her arm.

"Are you telling the truth; aren't you married to—him?" she demanded of Caris between clenched teeth.

Carissa, however, could not answer. Her bright roving gaze so perilously near tears had discovered young Brinker. He was surrounded by newspaper men, some of whom were craning their necks toward her. All at once, with a wide grin and a gesture of defeat, he came toward her.

The rest fell back as he approached. He took her arm with the quiet assurance any youth in the world might display toward his bride.

"I thought we might avoid some of this if we separated," he whispered.

Caris felt the blood race from her heart to her arm where his hand lay.

"Don't try to boob us! My eye! Look at Caris blush!"

One reporter edged closer to Carissa. "May I have a word with you, Mrs. Brinker?"

Mrs. Brinker! He had called her Mrs. Brinker. It spread over her like an enchanting wave; she was no longer Carissa Doyle! She was Mrs. Tod Brinker, a girl more to be envied than any girl in the world! No, not envied! To be pitied that it was only a jest; a cruel, merciless jest that would end in the depths of bitterest humiliation for her. How Nina hated her now, but how she would gloat when she found how little reason there was for hating her.

Nevertheless she raised her eyes to the reporter who had addressed her. "Mr. Brinker will speak for me."

Tod laughed, a deep amused laugh. "Come on, let's get out of here! Good girl!" he swiftly applauded under his breath.

With a wave of his hand he called, "We'll see you all later—" Caris found herself hurrying with him. Anything to escape that mob.

A yellow cab appeared as if by magic. He helped her in and swiftly it darted away, bumpty-bump up Front Street, past the huge terminals, past the old curiosity shop—

She felt his eyes upon her, but she couldn't meet them, couldn't bear to see the laughter that was bound to be there.

"Won't you look at me?" His voice was low, husky . . .

Against her will she raised a bright, hard gaze to his coaxing blue one. The smoldering fire in her eyes startled him.

"You can look at your husband that way, Mrs. Tod Brinker, on your wedding day!" he bantered.

"Oh," cried Caris between clenched teeth, "I hate you!"

"Hate me!" Tod let out his breath slowly. Then, after a long, wounding silence, unmarred by the sounds outside of their world, he spoke.

"I don't understand—I guess I was wrong—I thought— But why did you go through with that ceremony if you hate me? It is going to make a lot of unpleasant publicity!"

"Publicity!" flared the girl. "That

is all you think of! I went through with it because I thought you wanted to save yourself another kind of publicity!"

"You could think that of me!" marveled Tod Brinker with an odd catch in his voice.

"Well, what is there left to think?" sobbed Caris.

"The truth, perhaps," he gravely returned.

Caris doubled one small fist and pressed hard against her throat. She mustn't lose control of herself, mustn't begin believing some beautiful miracle that couldn't possibly be true! Yet his tender blue eyes were a hurt such as only love can inflict.

"The truth! I—don't understand."

"Carissa! Dearest!" His lean, strong hands seized her slim shoulders, pressed hard as he turned her facing him. "Surely you know I fell in love with you the instant I saw you— Then that kiss—I thought you knew then that you loved me. How could you think I would go through that ceremony unless I believed we both meant it? It seemed a wonderful thing to me—to be married to the girl of my dreams — at sunrise — in the teeth of the wind. I thought it meant that to you too—"

Slowly his hands released her, and she felt as if the gates of Paradise were closing in her face.

Just then the driver looked back as if seeking directions.

"What is your address?" asked Tod in a thick voice. "I'll get out at the next corner," he called to the driver, "and then tell you where to go."

Caris felt the blood recede from her heart. Her tongue thickened in her throat. Stop him, oh, stop him, lips, before it is too late. Tell him he is beloved, the lover in dreams come true!

The cab came to a grinding stop at the foot of the Madison cable car. Young Brinker got out and stood holding the door, waiting for her to speak. Something in her shining, transformed expression made him hesitate. Her small hands fluttered out beseechingly.

"Don't go!" she managed above the tumult of her heart.

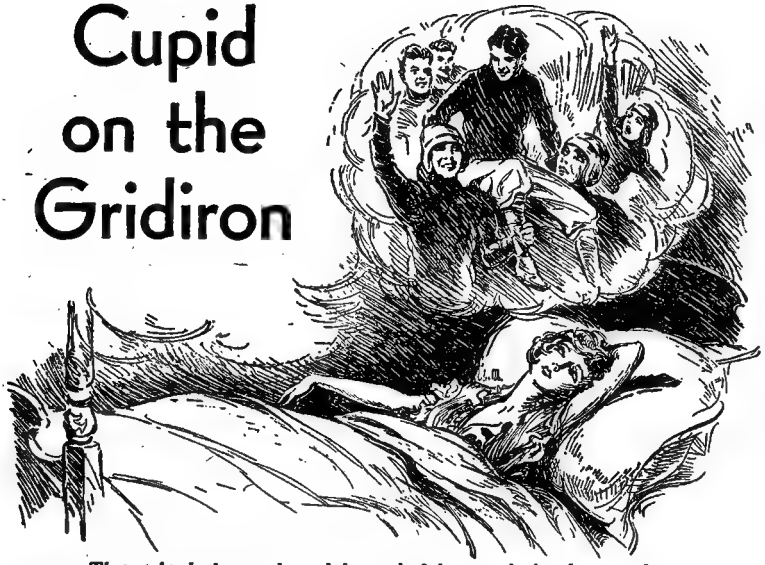
With one motion he reëntered the cab, with a terse order to the cab driver "to keep going," Tod took her hands hard within his own.

"What do you mean?" he demanded hoarsely.

"I loved you too—" she whispered, then having spoken that much, the words came tumbling out. "I have loved you always—"

"Caris, beloved! My wife—*my wife,*" he murmured in awe. Then, regardless of daylight or traffic or the inevitable publicity, Tod Brinker folded his arms about his bride. Their lips met.

Cupid on the Gridiron



That night she lay awake and dreamed of the man she loved—triumphant

By FAITH MORROW

THEY had called her Cricket when she was a tiny girl because she had been christened Augusta Frances for her paternal grandmother, and she simply did not fit either of those names. Now, at eighteen, being of this generation, she would have been nicknamed in any event. So Cricket she remained — a blue-eyed Cricket with red-gold hair and a tip-tilted nose, and she fired all things masculine with a desire to serve her.

Yet, perhaps because she had not really grown up, Cricket had never acquired a sense of power. She longed to be clever, a brilliant talker, and she knew that she was not. But no one who knew her had ever wanted to change by a featherweight the scale of Cricket's mentality. She was just herself, a self wholly adorable.

And yet she had been in love for two years with a man who was, if not entirely immune to her charm, by no means bowled over by it. He was Tod Radcliffe, the brother of Sally Radcliffe, her best friend. Tod was now a senior at Stafford University, and he had, according to Sally, very little interest in girls.

When Sally, therefore, came over one gray November morning to invite Cricket to go to Stafford with her, the invitation was almost as surprising as it was thrilling.

"Aunt Elizabeth wrote me this morning," Sally explained. "We are

to stay with her, and Bill Thomas will take us to the game Thanksgiving Day. Of course Tod can't go with us, because he plays on the team. You like football, don't you?"

"Oh, yes," said Cricket fervently, although there was probably nothing on earth about which she knew less. "Oh, yes, I simply adore it! Is—is Tod awfully good at it? But of course he is."

"I should say he is!" Sally agreed with prompt decision. "He's one of the best football players Stafford's ever had. Everybody knows that. He's—let me see—" She tilted her pretty head on one side and looked thoughtful. "Oh, yes — he's on the scrub team. That's awfully important, you know."

"Yes," said Cricket, looking deeply impressed. "Yes, indeed, I know. The scrub team is—well, it's just about the most important place to be." She added, "But how did Tod happen to suggest inviting me?"

"Well, you know how he is about girls. And he knows you. So he said to bring you, or anybody else I wanted." Then, fearing that this invitation might lack cordiality, she said hastily, "But it's you he really wants. Otherwise he never would have suggested you."

"No, I suppose not," Cricket agreed, although she sounded dubious. "But," she decided, "I'm going."

"Of course you are," Sally returned. "We'll have a wonderful time. Think what a good time we had when you and mother and I drove over to Stafford last June. You met Aunt Elizabeth then—do you remember?"

"Oh, yes, I remember her perfectly, and it's awfully good of her to invite me for Thanksgiving. Will—Tod be there—for dinner, I mean?"

"Rather! Both he and Bill are coming. I wish—I really do wish that Bill played on the team; but I presume he doesn't care about it, for of course he *could* play football if he wanted to."

"Certainly he could," Cricket assured her with comforting conviction. "But after all, if Bill played he couldn't take us to the game, and Tod's on the team, you know; so we'll be fearfully interested."

FOR the next week the girl lived in a dream-swept whirl of anticipation. Not only was she going to Stafford, at Tod's suggestion, to see him play on the scrub team; she was also going to have Thanksgiving dinner with him after the game at his aunt's house. It was almost like being one of the family.

Oh, she must do Tod credit! Her clothes must be perfect. If only she had a fur coat! Everybody knew that girls should wear fur coats to football games. But she didn't have one, so there was no use worrying about it. Anyway, her new black coat with its gray fox collar and cuffs was lovely. She could buy a close-fitting gray hat and a smart little gray frock. Thank goodness, she had that new evening dress of apple-green taffeta!

Cricket's preparations were all very exciting, and every one in Weymouth knew where she was going for Thanksgiving. But then, Weymouth was not a very large town, and its inhabitants were interested in everything Cricket did.

Naturally her mother was interested, too, but it must be admitted that she breathed a sigh of relief when, the day before Thanksgiving, Cricket and Sally boarded a train for Stafford. Cricket had been pressing and packing

the contents of her suitcase for three whole days. Also, she had been beautifying herself with every cold cream and lotion she could lay her hands upon. Cricket's mother had begun to fear that if her child had much more time at her disposal there would be no skin left on her face.

But at last they were settled in the train, bound for the college, and then—almost too soon—they were at the Stafford station. They were leaving the train, and Tod was there to meet them. Such a handsome, wonderful, breath-taking Tod!

"Hello, there, Cricket Morris!" he said genially. "It was awfully good of you to come." Then, after shaking hands with Cricket, he kissed his sister.

And the calm way Sally accepted that kiss! Of course, Cricket reasoned, she was his sister, but, even so, Sally must realize that Tod was different from any other brother in the world; different, in fact, from anybody at *all* in the world. One would think, then, that even his sister would be—well, a little *impressed* by his kiss.

"If he kissed me," thought Cricket breathlessly, "I know what I'd do: I'd drop right down on this platform in a dead faint! I *know* I would."

And so, perhaps, it was just as well that the idea of kissing Cricket seemed not even to occur to Tod. He led the two girls out of the station, seated them in his roadster, climbed in himself, and turned in the direction of the old colonial house where his Aunt Elizabeth Cunningham lived.

The air was crisp and clear, now, although a light snow had fallen earlier in the afternoon. Cricket looked around with bright, fascinated eyes. Lovely old Stafford!

And how different it looked with all the branches bare on the great trees and with this snow on the ground. She had been here before, in June, to hear the seniors sing on the campus. And, somehow, she thought of Stafford as listening, beneath the June stars, to the farewell songs of the seniors.

She had yet to learn that a football game at Stafford on Thanksgiving Day was an occasion second to none.

Tod left them at his aunt's, pleading immediate work that he must do, and promising to bring Bill over to see them that night.

A few minutes later they were greeted warmly by Mrs. Cunningham, who came out into the hall to meet them and to lead them into the stately but gracious old drawing-room, where tea awaited them. There were delicious little cakes, too, which Sally and Cricket devoured with youthful greed.

And yet both girls were satisfactorily hungry when dinner was served two hours later.

"Oh, to be young and going to a football game on Thanksgiving Day!" Mrs. Cunningham remarked whimsically toward the end of the meal.

"Why don't you come with us, Aunt Elizabeth?" Sally asked.

"Not I! If you needed to be chaperoned, as girls once did, I'd have to go, and almost freeze to death — but as things are to-day, I can stay at home and keep warm."

"But—you said you'd like to go—"

"Indeed I didn't. I meant that I'd like to be young, so that I'd want to go—which is altogether different. But I hear the boys. Since you've finished, you'd better go in to them."

CRICKET loved that evening. It was, in fact, the happiest evening she had ever spent. Almost at once Bill drew Sally over to one end of the drawing-room and began to talk

to her in low tones. That left Cricket and Tod alone—a highly satisfactory state of affairs.

"It was awfully good of you to come," he said for the second time that day.

"But I wanted to," she assured him. "I'm having a beautiful time, and it will be perfectly wonderful to see you play to-morrow."

"Oh," said Tod rather flatly, "but I don't know that I'll play. In fact, it's very unlikely that I shall. I have to be on hand, though, as it happens, in case I'm needed. A lot of our big men got banged up this year; so, much to my surprise, the coach put me in the first string subs."

Cricket's blue eyes had opened their widest.

"You may not *play!*" she exclaimed. "But of course you will. How could they possibly get along without you?"

Tod's grin was rueful. He had a vague idea that she was trying to be funny.

"That's right," he agreed, "how could they?"

"Besides," she continued, "since you're on that wonderful scrub team, how can you think for a minute that you won't play?"

The young man glanced at her quickly, and not without resentment. That last remark had sounded like a rather heavy-handed attempt to rub in the insignificance of his position. But something in Cricket's blue eyes baffled him.

"I'll bet," she decided, as he did not speak, "you're just *modest.*"

"What do you mean 'modest'?" he asked cautiously.

"Well, like Polly Ashton's older brother. He won the *croix de guerre* in the war. But do you think he'll let her put it up in the living room? He *will not!* He acts ridiculous about it, as though it's something to be ashamed of. Can you imagine that? Yet he knows perfectly well that Polly would like to put it up where all the girls could see it. Of course, she's told most of us about it, but she can't be sure she's remembered to tell every single girl, so it would be much better to have the thing right out in the living room. But Polly says her brother acts that queer way about his *croix de guerre* because he's so modest — and she said men were often that way. To tell you the truth, I've never noticed that they were; but now I'm inclined to think Polly may be right."

"And what makes you think so?" Tod inquired, grinning broadly now.

"You," he was informed. "I'll bet you're just being modest about the way you play football."

"Er—oh, no," he assured her. "You see, I really don't play much—"

"Now, listen to me, Tod Radcliffe!" Cricket interposed. "You might just as well stop talking that perfectly foolish way. Don't you suppose I know you're the best football player Stafford has ever had?"

Tod swallowed hard.

"Wh-what gave you that idea?" he stammered.

"Well, Sally told me a few things, but even if she hadn't I would have known."

"Just how much do you know about football, Cricket?" he experimented.

For a second she hesitated. It would be fearful, she told herself, if Tod should ever suspect the abysmal depth of her ignorance about this, his favorite sport. How he would despise her! Suppose—just suppose he should question her! But then he wouldn't; she'd just have to take a chance.

"Oh, I know all about it," she said

blithely. "I've been to ever so many games. Just what part do you play, Tod? I mean—are you the one who kicks the ball, or are you one of those that fall on it?"

Tod's features became oddly contorted. Cricket almost thought he was struggling either not to laugh or to cry—but what reason had he for either emotion?

At last, when he could speak, he acknowledged, "I am a substitute end!"

"Oh," said Cricket, "that's wonderful! Then of course you'll have to play to-morrow, and you'll win the game, too."

Again Tod swallowed. He looked a little stunned.

"Do you mean to say—do you *actually* mean to say that, if I *should* play to-morrow, you'll expect me to win the game?"

"Why, yes, silly! Who else would win it if you didn't?"

"Well, the regular back field might do something about it."

"Yes, of course he might help—but, if I were you, I wouldn't depend on him too much. You're the man Stafford's counting on—"

"But, my dear," Tod interrupted firmly, "can't you understand that I'm not really big enough to create a sensation on the football field?"

Cricket smiled at him then, and a dimple appeared, as if by magic, in her left cheek. In her blue eyes there was both tenderness and the toleration one grants a child.

"Just as though your height has anything to do with it!" she chided him. "Why, you're way bigger than *I* am. And don't you suppose I know you couldn't kick a ball or fall on it any better if you were taller?"

To this argument there seemed no logical answer. Tod, therefore, did not attempt to make any. He switched the conversation to a subject that had compelled his notice.

"Do you know," he said, like a man who had just made a discovery, "of all the adorable things ever created to lighten a dreary world, you're the most adorable. I never—"

But just then Bill and Sally joined them. Cricket could have slapped them both, and Tod looked annoyed, but neither of the newcomers seemed to notice. They made the party a foursome until it was time for the boys to leave.

Cricket lay awake for a long time that night, thinking of what Tod had said to her, and speculating about what else he might have said if only they had not been interrupted.

Tod thought she was adorable! He had told her so. Never, never before had he talked to her like that!

Was he, perhaps, falling in love with her? Oh, was that *possible?*

But, no, of course it wasn't. Even if he did not usually pay much attention to girls, he must have been thrown with a great many at college. He would have acquired a good line.

No man thought twice about telling a girl that she was adorable. It was merely a polite and always popular way of holding up his end of a conversation.

If only—if only he had meant it personally!

SHE awakened the next morning to a house deliciously scented with spiced cakes. The cook was preparing Thanksgiving dinner. It was Thanksgiving Day! And, oh, since she was going to the game to see Tod win and was afterward going to eat dinner with him, what a lot she had to be thankful for!

But suppose she knew to-day that Tod loved her? Well, she decided dreamily, if she knew that she would probably just die of thankfulness before she even saw him win that game.

The great stadium was packed that afternoon when Bill led Sally and Cricket to the best procurable seats on the Stafford side. The air was still crisp and cold, but now it seemed charged with expectancy, with high hopes, with glad, mad excitement.

The two girls had three large purplish chrysanthemums apiece, and felt pennants with flowing streamers; and Bill had brought automobile robes to tuck around them to keep out the cold. All settled they were, waiting to be thrilled by the struggle which would soon be taking place.

"I hope," Cricket remarked, "that Tod doesn't beat them too quickly."

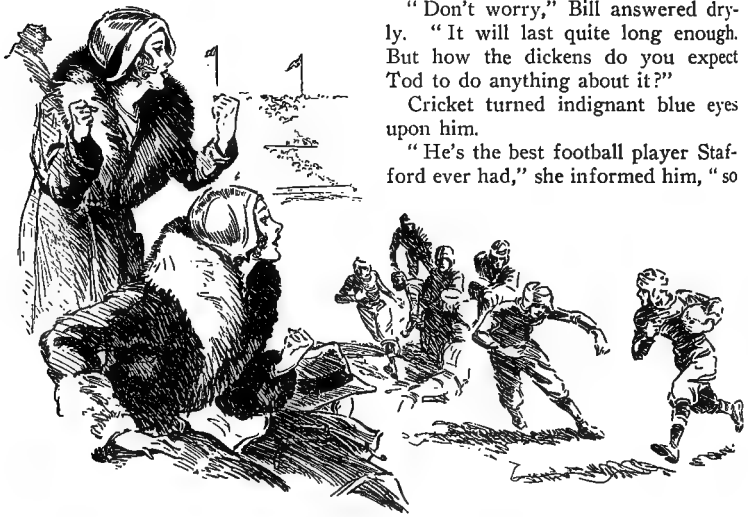
"Wh-what did you say?" Bill asked, his brows puckered in surprise.

"I hope," she explained carefully, "that Tod doesn't beat them right off—in the first few minutes, I mean. I'd like the game to last long enough to be exciting."

"Don't worry," Bill answered dryly. "It will last quite long enough. But how the dickens do you expect Tod to do anything about it?"

Cricket turned indignant blue eyes upon him.

"He's the best football player Stafford ever had," she informed him, "so why shouldn't I expect him to—to govern the whole game?"



Cricket leaped to her feet and called to Tod as if he could hear her above the crowd

Bill regarded her for a moment in open-mouthed astonishment. Then:

"Yeah," he said blankly. "Of course, that's right. Oh, sure!"

There was a moment's silence; then he asked with some caution, "Did you—did you know that Tod was on the scrub team?"

"Oh, yes," said Cricket brightly. "Isn't it wonderful?"

To this Bill said nothing at all. He merely looked bewildered.

A young giant, wearing a sweater and carrying a megaphone, came out

then to lead the cheering section. And into that cheer he put all his heart and soul as well as the use of every muscle.

"Siss, boom bah, rah, rah, rah!
Razzle-dazzle, wiggle-waggle—
It's a lovely day!
If you don't know what that means,
There is just one way to tell:
If it ain't what it is and it is what it ain't,
You'll know it's a Stafford yell—
W O W!"

Cricket listened, holding her breath with delight. This was Tod's college they were cheering! Dear old Stafford! *Tod's* Stafford!

A few minutes later the rival teams ran out upon the field. Each team was greeted with song and more cheers.

And then the game began.

"But where's Tod?" Cricket demanded of Bill. "I can't see him anywhere—"

"Well," Bill hedged, "he isn't out just yet. You see, they—they sort of save him—until they really need him, I mean. He—he's too valuable to waste. There may be other games this season, you know."

"But there won't be any more. This is the end of the football season, and I want to see Tod play," she protested.

Something happened just then down on the field. Cricket hadn't any idea what it was; neither had Sally; but as the people before them jumped up, they jumped up also, spilling their chrysanthemums, pennants, and lap robes.

It took Bill some time to find the pennants and chrysanthemums, and it took more time to tuck the robes again around the feet and laps of the two girls.

As he had to go through this performance every time Cricket and Sally sprang to their feet, he could not exactly give the game his undivided attention.

It was with some surprise, therefore, that he noted, after settling his companions for about the twelfth time, that Tod was actually on the field. He was at end, of course—things had been happening to the ends that day. The two regulars had had to be taken out early in the game, and shifts had been made to the backfield as well. So Tod had been given his chance.

"Great guns!" Bill exclaimed. "Old Tod's in the game!"

"Where?" Cricket cried. "Where is he?"

Sally, too, demanded that her brother should be pointed out to her.

When they saw him, Cricket drew a long sigh of relief.

"Everything will be all right, now, won't it?" she asked trustingly.

Bill ran nervous fingers through his hair. How to explain, without shattering her idol, that Tod, a mere sub end, simply couldn't be expected to win this game!

"You see," he pointed out, "they didn't bring him in soon enough. That was poor management on the part of the coach—oh, *very* poor management. But there you are: Tod couldn't do anything about it when they kept him out, and he can't do anything now that he's in. It's too late, worse luck."

Cricket's blue eyes were wide with indignation.

"Do you mean to say that Tod won't win this game?"

"As things stand, I don't see how he can. But as I just told you, it's the coach's fault. Coaches often act that way, though, with star football players. They consider them so valuable that they keep them out of the games as long as they can, for fear they'll be hurt."

"Well," Cricket pondered, "if the coaches are so afraid the star football players will get hurt, why don't they have somebody good to double for them in the rough parts of the game—the way producers have doubles for the stars in the movies?"

"Now—now *that's* an idea!" said Bill weakly. "But—hadn't you better watch Tod? He — my word, he really does seem to be doing things!"

"Of course he is," Cricket retorted. "And I don't care what you say, he'll win this game!"

BUT Bill was now too much absorbed in the skirmish even to hear her. The score was tied, and it was the last quarter, with only four more minutes to play; but the other team was pressing Stafford hard in imminent hope of making a touchdown. Tod, however, to Bill's amazement, was breaking up the opponents' plays whenever they approached his end.

Then it seemed to Bill, and perhaps to the entire Stafford team, not to mention the coach, that a miracle happened. Tod received a forward pass, intended for a Stafford star halfback who was spilled—and then Tod began to run. On, on he ran, while occupants of the grand stand stood on their seats, shrieking and cheering.

Bill very nearly exploded with excitement.

"Go on, *Tod!*" he yelled. "Go on—go *on!*"

And Cricket, in nowise surprised by her hero's sudden leap into the spotlight, but plainly delighted by it, screamed with the rest, "Tod! Tod! Go *on!*"

And Tod did go on. He made a touchdown.

Then pandemonium reigned.

"What do you know about *that?*" the delighted Bill cried above the din. "Old Tod! He saved the game—"

"But," said a radiant-eyed Cricket, "didn't I tell you he would?"

Bill looked at her, started to speak, paused, and then cheerfully agreed, "Sure you did."

A wave of song swept over the grandstand. Bill removed his hat, looking suddenly very young and solemn, and joined in:

"Men of Stafford, sing ye merry,
Sing with glad, uplifted heart;
Laud and praise her ground and roof-tree,
Sons of Stafford, ere ye part.

"Good old Stafford, while ye stand,
Beauty lingers in the land;
Sing then, sons of Stafford, sing!
Till life's end to her ye'll cling."

Cricket stood very still, listening. When the last notes of the song had died away she found that her eyes were blurred with tears.

How they loved it — this dear old college!

"Sing then, sons of Stafford, sing!
Till life's end to her ye'll cling."

And Tod was one of its sons—one of its famous sons, of whom the whole college was proud. Was he singing now?

But Cricket snapped suddenly back to the present. Where *was* Tod? Then:

"Oh, look!" she cried. "Look—they're carrying Tod about on their shoulders!"

"And that," said Bill, "is just as it should be. If you ask me, I think that Tod, after this day's work, should never need to walk another step."

Bill took Sally and Cricket back to Mrs. Cunningham's then. Both girls wanted to wait for Tod, but finally ac-

cepted Bill's word for it that it would take Tod some time to change his clothes and get away from the hero worshipers.

Back at Mrs. Cunningham's they learned that dinner was almost ready. By the time Tod arrived they could start to serve.

How hungry they were! They could smell the turkey roasting. It made them more ravenous than ever. But Bill had been right: It was taking Tod an amazing time to reach his aunt's house.

Finally Mrs. Cunningham, after hearing all the exciting details of the game, went out into the dining room to make sure the table was arranged to her satisfaction. A minute later Bill and Sally wandered, apparently without intent, over to the library.

That was how it happened that, when at last Tod did come, he found Cricket alone in the drawing-room. But it would have been quite obvious to an onlooker that he did not miss any of the others.

He crossed straight to the girl's side, took her hands in his, and looked down at her with excitement and grim determination battling together in his dark eyes.

"I've got to explain," he told her, "and you've got to listen to me. Do you know why I helped to win that game to-day? Do you know why I played decent football for the first time in my life?"

"Of course I do," said Cricket promptly. "You won the game for Stafford because you're so—so *wonderful.*"

"I helped to win the game"—Tod spoke with deliberation—"because I knew you expected me to win it. I knew that if I got on that field to-day and failed to make a showing you'd be disappointed in me. And because I couldn't bear you to be disappointed in me, I—well, I performed the impossible. Impossible for me, that is, because I've never been a football player worth mentioning, Cricket. I've been substitute end on the scrub team. And the scrub isn't what you think it is. It's a team made up of the men who aren't good enough to play anywhere else. I've never heard of a substitute end for the scrub team playing in the big game. So many of our big men have been battered up this season that the coach had to put me in the first string. I'd never done anything sensational. They put me in that game to-day because two other ends were hurt and two were moved to backfield, so they had to have somebody—and I got the biggest promotion I shall probably ever get in my life. Just the same—now get this straight—I was about as unimportant as any one in the game could very well be. But luck was with me. And yet it wasn't all luck. It was the—the desire to satisfy you that spurred me on, made me fight. I won that game for you, Cricket. It was as though you were right beside me, urging me on. And as I ran down that field I even imagined I could hear your voice above the roar from the grand stand."

"Well," said Cricket eagerly, "maybe you could. I was simply shrieking. I was saying, 'Go on, *Tod! Go on!*'"

"Perhaps my heart heard you," Tod returned, smiling tenderly into her so blue and so earnest eyes. "Certainly my ears couldn't have heard that one little shriek out of a howling mob. But then, if my heart hadn't been involved, I wouldn't have helped to win the game."

"Wh-why wouldn't you?"

"Well, you see, I love you, dear."

Cricket's breath caught in her throat.

"You — love me!" she echoed. "You mean you—*really* love me?"

"Yes, I mean that I really love you, infinitely and for all time. And I also mean—will you marry me, sweetheart?"

"Oh, y-yes!" said Cricket, positively stammering in her effort to speak before he could change his mind.

And then Tod took her in his arms.

"You baby!" he murmured, close to her lips. "You, darling, blessed, precious baby!"

TOD'S lips came nearer; touched Cricket's. It was very gentle and almost shy, that first kiss. And then, as her mouth stirred beneath his, he crushed her to him, kissing her as though he had found on her lips the breath of life.

"I've loved you so long—for two whole years," she whispered. "And this morning I was thinking that if I knew to-day, Thanksgiving Day, that you loved me, I would just die of thankfulness. And now just suppose I *should!*"

His arms tightened around her.

"Just let me catch you dying, and I'll bring you back from any other world you wander into," he warned. "You're mine, now, darling heart, and I'll never let you go where I can't follow. When we're married — and, by the way, we can be married in June, right after I graduate, can't we?"

"Yes," said Cricket, pressing her cheek to his, dreamily content. Then, she added, "How Stafford must hate to see you leave!"

"But why, darling?"

"Well, on account of your football. They'll just never get another player like you, Tod. There'll never be any one else that they can so absolutely *depend* on."

"But, sweetheart, I explained how I happened to get in that game to-day. I told you I had never been a football player." Tod looked puzzled.

Cricket smiled up at him. Her blue eyes crinkled delightfully at the corners, and her dimple was beguiling.

"You don't suppose, do you," she asked, "that I paid any attention to all the nonsense you talked when you first came in? Why, of course, darling, I knew you were acting exactly like Polly Ashton's brother—the one who got the *croix de guerre* and didn't want anybody to know it. You're modest about your football reputation just as he's modest about his medal. Why, *anybody* could have figured *that* out!"

Tod digested this in silence. He had, then, come into this room, told Cricket the absolute truth about his connection with to-day's game — and she *hadn't believed one word of it!*

So far as she was concerned, he not only was, but had been for some time, the mainstay of the Stafford football team! And that was that.

Anyway, what difference did it make? He would not play football again. This was the last game of the season, and next June he would graduate.

So he did not argue with Cricket. He kissed her.

And that was how Bill and Sally found them.

"Oh," Sally exclaimed, when it had been made clear to her that Cricket would be her sister, "how simply gorgeous! I know of only one thing even more gorgeous. That is—of course *I* think it more so—because it's about Bill and me."

"In other words," Bill told Tod, "I crave the honor of crashing into your family, old man."

Then there were more congratulations. And the two girls kissed each other for the second time.

"Queer, aren't they?" Bill asked, regarding Sally with thinly veiled pride. He added, "Have you ever taken your sister to a football game?"

Tod admitted that he had not.

"Well," Bill continued, "if you ever should, you'll realize that I certainly do love her, since, right after taking her to a game, I proposed to her."

"I don't know what you mean," Sally pouted. "What did I do to-day that I shouldn't have done?"

"Well, you dropped chrysanthemums, pennants, and automobile robes all over the floor every time you jumped up."

"Oh!" said Cricket. "And did I do that, too?"

"You did," Bill declared inflexibly. "Tod can look forward with high glee to the time when he first takes you to a football game. If he hasn't learned before, he'll learn then, among *other* things, that he is getting a wife, who, whenever she arises, drops everything droppable about her."

Tod smiled down into Cricket's now rueful blue eyes.

"I am," he stated conclusively, "getting exactly what I want."

"Well," Bill boasted, "as to that, so am *I*. But I should warn you not to mix Cricket up with football."

Before Tod could reply, Mrs. Cunningham came in to call them to dinner. Of course they told her their news, and, equally, of course, she was pleased.

"So I have four very happy young people to eat dinner with me," she said gently, and kissed the two girls. "This," she added, "is a very real Thanksgiving."

They went out to dinner, then. And such a Thanksgiving dinner it was! The four young people, who had temporarily forgotten their hunger, were now delightfully aware of it.

It was good to be as hungry as this on Thanksgiving Day in the presence of such a dinner. And it was good, too—gloriously good—to have such glad, high, and thankful hearts.

RADIO SINGER

ACROSS a continent he sings,
And millions listening, somehow know
That life is full of coming springs,
And skies to see, and roads to go.

—*Mary Carolyn Davies*

What was this mystery? Why did they all want the one talisman?

The Street of Closed Doors

By UNA BUNKER

HIGH up in San Francisco's Chinatown the fashionable Red Pagoda was entertaining its nightly throng of revelers. Little sloe-eyed Chinese maids in delectable pantaloons of jade and rose brocade were padding about between the garlanded tables with their trays of foreign dishes to tempt the American taste.

Anne Brent bit exploringly into a tiny pickled melon, keeping her eyes down to hide the excitement, the happiness, the adoration in their golden depths. It was enough just to be here to-night, to have Warren Colby hold her in his arms as they danced, to have him see her for once as she really was, instead of the humdrum little file clerk whom he had hired that dark day last fall out of pity.

It had been pity! She had seen it in his face as he sat there at his desk looking at her, watching her trying so hard to keep from her eyes the desolation of the days she had fought through before coming to him.

Of course their visit to-night to the

Go gle

palatial restaurant of Ming Low was only business; she would have known that even if Rhoda Lawson had not taken such pains to impress it upon her. It was her coppery hair and rose-tinted complexion rather than Rhoda's dark beauty which would best display the jade and amber set which Warren was showing the wealthy Chinese collector to-night. The Colby Importing Company showed many of their rarer jewels that way. The effect on a "lovely lady" did more to sell an exquisite necklace than anything else!

Warren Colby had come to Anne that afternoon and asked had she some sort of a gold thing she could wear? As it happened, she had, a gown of misty chiffon, golden as her eyes, a little worn now, but beautiful as a dream in the soft glow of Chinese lanterns.

Her happy gaze drifted across the dancing floor to the bower of wisteria and crimson rambler roses where an American orchestra was playing. Couples were threading out from the balconies that lined the floor.

"Let's have this one," suggested Warren.

He was tall and handsome, with his gleaming head as black as his dinner clothes. How sweet it was, dancing with him! The girl's heart tumbled deliciously as he looked down at her. He liked the way she was wearing her hair to-night, she could tell that. In tawny ripples it curved about her small ears, showing the amber pendants hanging like drops of liquid gold.

"Do you think"—Anne's eyes lifted the veriest little beneath shy lashes—"I wear the jade and amber set all right?"

Young Colby's gaze went over the string of beads lying in all its barbaric beauty against her young throat.

"You wear it superbly, Anne. No one could wear it better."

"Not even Rhoda?"

"No, not even Rhoda," Warren laughed, and involuntarily Anne cuddled nearer. If she could be here forever, close in his arms, hearing his voice, his dear laugh! Terror stabbed her. If she couldn't make him love her, make him learn soon, before Rhoda captured him completely— But what chance has a girl with one golden gown against a girl like Rhoda Lawson, beautiful, wealthy, sought after, who worked only because it is the fashion these days to work?

"I once saw a chain that would look even better on you than this one. Anne," Warren was saying. "It was in the same collection where I found this, but it wasn't for sale. A very odd green-blue matrix, set in beaten gold. It was gorgeous!"

He had drawn her closer—could she be mistaken? And he was looking down at her with such tenderness in his face. As though—but that could never be—he had read far back in the shadows behind her shining eyes the story of those days months past!

"This chain is beautiful enough for any one," she answered, clearing away the faint huskiness in her throat.

AT that moment an uncomfortable feeling that some one was watching them came over Anne. She glanced across Warren Colby's shoulder at the throng of faces whirling past like a happy sea.

Through an archway of blossoming cherry in one of the smaller dining balconies she glimpsed a man. He was alone at his table, leaning back in his chair, smoking.

"George Piteau!" she exclaimed under her breath.

"What is it?" asked Warren as he felt her shiver.

"Oh, nothing!" she laughed with a careless shrug that belied the white rising beneath her flushed cheeks. "I just glimpsed a long-lost friend who possibly might be a bit anxious to see me."

She tugged at Colby's arm as they neared their own places.

"Let's go back and see if our maid has brought our dinner. I'm famished."

ANNE watched the little Chinese figure in rose brocade placing their dishes on the table. Long, slim, Oriental hands—ebony-black hair —delicate cheek—scarlet curve of mouth—

"Why, Lilee Chong!" Anne gave a sudden gasp as the girl turned so that she caught a full view of her face. "You, working here! I'm just too glad for words to see you!" She caught the small olive-skinned hand and gave it a squeeze, flushing a little as she explained to Warren Colby, "I knew Lilee a long time ago."

She ate her chow mein, pretending a hunger which she no longer felt. She was seeing too many people from that past which she was trying to forget! She wished Ming Low would come and look at the necklace so that they could go. Why pretend that she was here because Warren wanted her company? It was only business to him; she had known that from the first!

As Lilee cleared away the dishes and brought strips of candied melon and coconut, a man suddenly appeared in the archway of their balcony. Evidently Warren Colby knew him!

"Hello, Piteau." Warren rose to his feet and extended a hand in greeting.

George Piteau bowed.

"I see Miss Lawson is not with you to-night?" He glanced toward Anne, choosing apparently to leave their former acquaintance unknown. The girl steeled herself to meet his eyes and saw them flickering with suave amusement.

"Miss Brent" — Warren Colby turned to her—"may I present Mr. George Piteau? He's with the realty firm of Mateson and Howe, but as a side line is a competitor of mine in old stones and ivories."

"I wouldn't say that," remarked Piteau with his easy smile. "I only play a bit with them. May I remain in the charmed circle?" he begged, as the wealthy Chinese jewel collector in his silken clothing and soft-footed sandals appeared in the flowered archway.

Ming Low gave a courtly nod, and turned to slide across the opening a trellis garlanded in vines, fashioning their balcony into a private room.

"It has been some months since I've seen such a beautiful selection of stones," George Piteau said when they could turn their attention to the jade and amber necklace. "Miss Brent"—he paused infinitesimally over the name—"wears them as though they'd been designed and carved for herself alone."

Anne felt an angry flush stinging her cheeks.

"Perhaps," she suggested, "Ming Low would like to have a closer look at them." She unclasped the catch and laid the exquisite strand on the embroidered tablecloth.

Shining and scintillating, it lay there, each bead a masterpiece of the carver's art.

"And there are eardrops, too," murmured Piteau, "over three centuries old." He and the Chinese bent over,

closely examining the intricate, lovely carving.

"The same!" Piteau said. "Brought from Asia several years ago by Dalton Garrett, the collector. After his untimely death his collection came up for sale, but this necklace had disappeared, along with another choice chain; a turquoise matrix, set in beaten gold."

"You're mistaken, Piteau," returned Warren Colby with a touch of coldness. "This set was sold to me by Garrett himself months before he died. I have all the papers on it."

"I beg your pardon. My mistake!" was the suave response. Then Piteau leaned back and lighted a cigarette, lowering his eyelids against the smoke of it.

Anne rose and went to the edge of the balcony, moisture on her brow.

She shrank away from him. "Never! Never!"

Below her the lights of the city fell like a starlit curtain to the black floor of the bay. Ferry boats were putting out from the long bulk of the slips, palaces of light, trailing in their wake

a shimmering path of phosphorescence. She heard Piteau speaking again:

"How's your collection of ivories, Colby? You have a shipment coming in to-morrow, haven't you?"

"Not many ivories this time," Warren answered. "A string of elephants and a number of dragons. They're good, though, my buyer said."

"I'll be down to look them over."

As George Piteau talked, Anne knew that Ming Low was listening, listening and saying nothing as he gazed, apparently absorbed at the stones before him. During the whole time, the girl noted, the Chinese said scarcely anything, but his small, jet-black, impassive eyes seemed to hold the wisdom of the ages behind their unblinking lids.

George Piteau rose to go.

"I'll probably want a couple of your elephants," he told Colby. His glance swept across, admiring the charming picture Anne made in her golden gown against the vine framing the balcony. "And I shall live in the hope of seeing you again," his eyes told her.

She stared past him coldly.

When he had gone, Ming Low looked up.

"I will buy the five carved elephants you have coming in to-morrow," he said to Warren Colby. "You save them for me?"

Warren objected mildly. "Piteau might feel that he has the first choice. They are all exactly alike, though, save for size."

"George Piteau only want two. I take the other three. But three in a row I want—the smallest three, or the largest three, or the three in the middle. I leave him his choice, the largest or the smallest, that is fair."

Behind his mild manner Anne sensed the sagacity and tremendous strength which had brought Ming Low up to a position of high power in Chinatown.

"What is your price?" he asked Colby.

Without blinking an eye, he wrote out a check for the sum Warren Colby named, a price that caused Anne an intake of breath.

BUT the elephants were worth it, she acknowledged a few days later as she stood beside Rhoda Lawson in Colby's office looking down at the exquisite morsels of ivory strung out on a strip of black velvet.

They were not large—from about four inches down to the tiniest figurine—but they were marvelously proportioned and flawlessly carved, representing the very acme of an ancient art. Old ivory, satiny, mellowed, glowing, as old ivory had glowed down through Chinese dynasties.

Ming Low had bought the first three, or the last three, or the three center ones. Then he would get the middle one, either way Piteau chose, said Anne to herself.

"And it's the darlingest one of all!" she exclaimed to Rhoda. "I'd rather have it than any, wouldn't you?"

Warren Colby looked on, amused, as Anne cupped it caressingly in her pink palm, examining each delicate fold of muscle, laughing delightedly at the impudent little lifted trunk.

"George Piteau won't get his hands on this baby elephant." A surge of gladness went over her at thought of that. Her eyes met those of the young man, and the color washed suddenly over her cheeks.

That afternoon when she was alone in the salesroom Piteau appeared in the grilled doorway. Anne leaned against a showcase as he came forward, her head held defiantly.

"Good afternoon, Miss Brent."

She slid open one of the showcases.

"You came," she asked coldly, "to see some of the new shipment?"

"Perhaps"—he bowed—"I came to call upon an old friend."

"You need not have troubled."

"No?" Musingly, with his suave smile, he bent to examine one of the carved dragons.

"You disappeared, my dear. Like finding a minnow in the sea in a town like this. Your name changed, too!"

"Only the last part left off, and it wouldn't have mattered anyway," Anne flared, "save for the inconvenience of having you cluttering up the landscape!"

"As fiery as ever!" Piteau murmured. "What I always found so fascinating. I might have known I'd discover you working among rare old stones and ivories."

"Why shouldn't I work among them?" Her eyes blurred unexpectedly. "I adore them!"

There was utmost sweetness in Piteau's smile as he slid his card forward. "Could I trouble you to show me to Mr. Colby? I want to make my selection of the elephants."

Anne gave a triumphant grin.

"You're a little too late, Mr. Piteau," she remarked as sweetly. "Ming Low gave Mr. Colby a check for his selection of them last night!"

Piteau's suavity was unbroken, but the faint pinching in of his nostrils showed the fury flowing through him.

"Ming Low moves quickly," he returned smoothly. "And now, my dear, *will* you be so kind as to show me Mr. Colby's office? I also came to see him about some property he is interested in buying for a home—Seaview, out on Ocean Boulevard. You may know the place."

The color flamed hotly over the girl's cheeks.

George put out a hand, pink and puffy, unlined.

"What do you say we be friends, Anne? You don't want me to tell Warren Colby that you changed your name when you came here to work for him, I take it?"

She was silent.

"No, I'll not tell him," Piteau nodded. "It might look suspicious if anything happened here. We'll be friends, what say, Anne? I'll forget the disappearance of a valuable matrix chain from the Dalton Garrett collection last fall, and in return you may be able to do me a favor or two sometime." He glanced down into the showcase filled with beautiful art treasures. "You used to like me a little, Anne."

She never had! She had always hated the piggy little gleam that came up in his eyes when he looked at her. She drew away roughly as his hand touched hers across the showcase.

"Don't be maudlin!"

Piteau grinned unpleasantly.

"All right. Just as you say. But you might feel differently, one of these days!"

Anne stood watching his dapper form disappearing into Warren Colby's private office. A wave of misery choked her. So Warren was buying a home—Seaview. Then, of course, he and Rhoda— If George Piteau told him of her, of the matrix chain that Warren himself had spoken of the other night— If George told him of those terrible days last fall at Seaview— Oh, if he did!

After an interminable half hour Piteau came out of Colby's private office. He paused at the front of the showroom to have Rhoda Lawson

show him some rose quartz. They seemed to know each other quite well.

Anne took the afternoon mail in to Warren Colby. He was bent over his desk, examining the photographs that Piteau had left. He glanced up as she entered.

"Did that man—" Golden eyes cried aloud the fear that froze her lips to silence.

Warren remarked casually, "Mr. Piteau mentioned how charming you were the other night."

"That all?" she laughed, trembling a little.

He smiled. "I didn't please him particularly, letting Ming Low have first choice of the elephants. He decided he didn't want any of them, after all."

"He did?" Anne's eyes gleamed. "I'm so glad! They're too sweet for him!"

"He isn't the most agreeable customer in the world to handle when he gets his mind definitely set on a thing."

"He isn't!" she agreed, quickly but silently.

She glanced at the photographs on the desk.

"Some views of the place I'm thinking of buying," Warren remarked, spreading them out for her to see.

Anne gazed and gazed at the lovely villa set in gardens: creamy façades, an outdoor staircase leading up to a balcony with a wrought-iron railing where one viewed the sunlit sheen of the sea.

"It's out on Ocean Boulevard," he told her. "Five acres in all. And there's a stable for horses, with miles of sandy beach to run. I've always wanted a horse, haven't you, Anne? Shall I buy Seaview?"

She gave a brittle little laugh. Why ask her?

SHE leaned over, pretending to study the pictures. But in the blur before her eyes she could scarcely see even the barest outline of them. She had known this was coming almost ever since she came to work here, she was telling herself fiercely. Why make a fuss over it now? Rhoda would be a beautiful and fitting mistress for a place like that—Rhoda with her lovely clothes and regal manner of wearing them.

Anne raised her head.

"I suppose, then, I'm to—ah—wish you much happiness?"

Her eyes were hard and bright as she faced him, and her lips smiled, a queer molded little smile that seemed to have grown like stone on her white face.

"That depends." The young man's eyes flickered. "If I—my sweet lady will—that is—" He broke off, settling his shoulders with the funny little gesture that she had always adored. "Anyway," he resumed, "I believe it's a good investment. If things don't turn out as I hope, I can sell it again for an advance of several thousand."

"Yes, it's probably safe enough to do that." Anne winked back sudden blinding tears.

He was peering closely into her face.

"Why, Anne, you're crying!"

She looked up into his face defiantly, and he bent and kissed her full upon the lips.

She stamped her foot.

"I wouldn't want"—she choked—"*my* husband kissing other women!"

"You wouldn't?" His eyelids were lowered as he looked into the swimming golden eyes. "You're such a sweet child, Anne!" He glanced up at a

sound just outside the door, then turned to light a cigarette.

Had some one been out there, about to come in? Fiery-cheeked, the girl bent to the first task at hand.

When she went out again to the main salesroom Rhoda was sorting some rock crystals.

"Have you seen," Anne found herself asking, "the beautiful villa Mr. Colby's thinking of buying?"

Rhoda looked up with an expression of tolerant amusement in her magnificent dark eyes.

"Have I seen it?" She laughed patronizingly. "Warren and I were out last Sunday and went all through it, deciding things."

"You were?"

Anne felt the blood flushing over her skin in hot waves. They had been deciding things about that loveliest of lovely homes overlooking the glorious Pacific! Then it was true, there could be no doubt of that!

"I won't, I can't stand it!" she sobbed into her pillow that night. But the next morning, a little less bright of eye and cheek, she was at work again, filing away some letters in the outer office.

"Anne"—Warren Colby came to the door of his private office and called—"will you please come here for a moment,"

She caught her breath at the sharpness in his voice.

He was standing before the open door of the safe, an anxious frown on his countenance.

"You were careful about putting the elephants away yesterday, Anne?"

"Yes," she replied on a breathless note. "I put them right there in the left hand tray of the safe, each wrapped separately."

"And there the tray is," remarked Warren, pointing to it on his desk, "with the elephants, each wrapped separately—except that now there are only four elephants instead of five!"

Anne ran her hand through the velvet-lined box. The middle elephant, the exquisite creamy one, was gone!

"I put them right there." Startled, she looked up at Warren, motioning to the compartment of the safe where she had placed them so carefully. "Rhoda said to put them right there."

"Put what right there?" asked a voice sharply.

Anne turned to see Rhoda Lawson standing in the doorway.

"Why, the ivory elephants, Rhoda. You remember. We wrapped them all and put them into the safe."

"I remember nothing of the sort," retorted the other girl. "You told me you'd put them away yourself. You were so keen about them."

As Anne gazed at the flinty gleam behind her smiling eyes a shock of amazement went through her. Why should Rhoda be so hateful when Warren Colby loved her, when she had everything her own way? Of course she must remember! They had done it together; Rhoda had closed the safe herself, toying idly for a moment with the combination!

"Never mind." Colby dismissed the subject with a wave of the hand as Anne stood, scarlet-cheeked and speechless. "It's just been misplaced. We'll find it before Ming Low comes. He'll probably be satisfied with one of the others, anyway."

BUT Ming Low was not satisfied with one of the others! It was the tiny middle one he wanted and must have! He visited the Colby Importing Company the following morning in his gleaming silks and

silent slippers, and was closeted with Warren Colby for a long time. When Anne returned from lunch she looked timidly in through the door of the office.

Colby was sitting at his desk, his head leaning on his hand. He glanced about at sound of her in the doorway and Anne's heart gave a bound. His face was drawn and white.

"Did you" — she hesitated — "find the elephant for Ming Low?"

Warren made a grimace intended for a smile.

"No, I didn't find it. But I told Ming Low it would be found by the end of the week. Found," he repeated with white emphasis, "and delivered to him by the end of the week. There are reasons why it must be delivered, Anne."

"I can't imagine," said she huskily, "where it could have gone!"

"Don't worry. We'll find it."

But a day passed, and another and another, and the ivory elephant was nowhere to be found. It had disappeared as completely as though it had never been.

"You know, Anne," Rhoda remarked on the third day in a drawling aside, "it was to be delivered to Ming Low to-night. And a Chinaman expects a man to keep his word."

To-night! The blood in Anne's temples throbbed.

"You know where that elephant is as much as I know!" she blazed. "I can't see why—" Her eyes filled and she turned away as George Piteau sauntered into the showroom.

He spoke a few words to Rhoda,

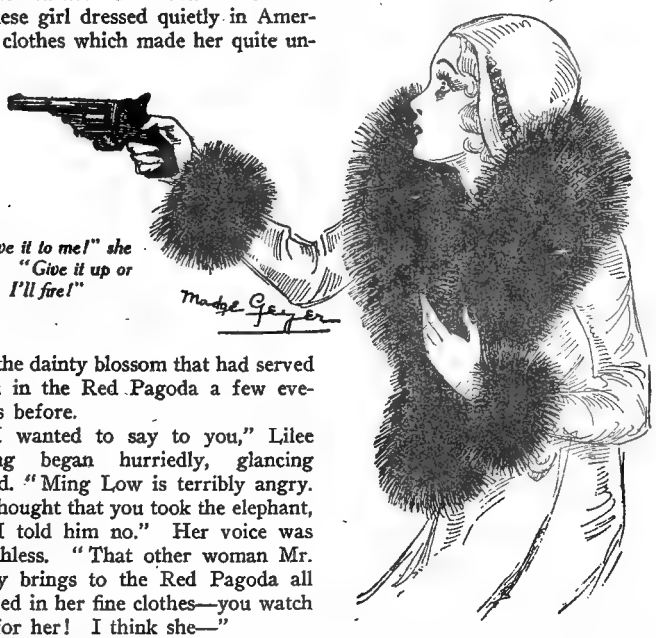
then went on into the private office to see her boss.

Warren's face had been sterner today. Anne gazed at the door behind which George Piteau had disappeared. Surely Warren could not believe that she had taken the elephant? Just deliberately taken it! If George Piteau told him about the matrix chain, about her changing her name and all, what else could he believe? She would be arrested, as George had threatened last fall!

In an agony Anne left work that night before Piteau came from Colby's

office. People were hurrying home through the gray, fog-filled twilight, eager for the warm firesides that awaited them. Abruptly, as Anne pressed through the throng at an intersection, some one touched her on the arm. Some one was walking along beside her!

She turned and saw a slender Chinese girl dressed quietly in American clothes which made her quite unlike the dainty blossom that had served them in the Red Pagoda a few evenings before.



"Give it to me!" she said. "Give it up or I'll fire!"

"I wanted to say to you," Lilee Chong began hurriedly, glancing round. "Ming Low is terribly angry. He thought that you took the elephant, but I told him no." Her voice was breathless. "That other woman Mr. Colby brings to the Red Pagoda all dressed in her fine clothes—you watch out for her! I think she—"

Lilee was gone into the gray stream of hurrying humanity.

Anne could eat no dinner that night. She went out and walked along the streets, looking aimlessly into the show windows gay with spring displays. In her unhappy musings she found her footsteps passing the quiet street where she had worked for the past months.

Abruptly, she stopped short in the shadow of a doorway.

Rhoda Lawson was coming along the street toward her, walking as though she were merely out for an evening stroll, but when she reached the Colby Importing Company she gave a quick glance about and disappeared into the entrance.

"Now, what's she up to?"

Anne slipped quietly along to the entrance.

Her heart was thudding in her breast a few moments later, as she crept, the veriest shadow, along the display room that led to Warren Colby's office.

The door of the outer office where the files were kept was open, she was thankful for that! Beyond the bulk of the files she could see Rhoda seated at

Warren Colby's desk, taking up the telephone.

"George?" Rhoda spoke softly into the mouthpiece. "Well, I'm here. You'll be up in ten minutes? Don't be any longer than that," she laughed in a voice charged with suppressed excitement. "Good you got your man lined up at last. I've had to hide away this bit of ivory too long for comfort!"

At her next move Anne crouched down behind one of the show cases.

Rhoda had come out to the file cases in the outer office. She knelt quickly, and from one of the lower drawers which Anne seldom opened, she drew out a tiny, carefully wrapped packet. Back at the desk again, she unrolled its tissue wrappings.

"The lost ivory elephant!" Anne gasped under ner breath. Ming Low's elephant which Warren Colby, his face gray with worry, had promised would be delivered to-night! Rhoda and George Piteau working together to rob Warren Colby! Hiding it in the files so that if it were found before they were ready to take it away, it would seem that Anne had stolen it! Amazement, bewilderment, fierce indignation welled up in the watching girl.

"I'll show you, Rhoda Lawson!" she cried under her breath. "Oh, if I can, before George Piteau gets here!"

She felt backward in the darkness to the shelf beneath the counter where a small revolver was always kept.

When she slipped back up to the doorway of Warren Colby's office, Rhoda was examining the elephant, turning it, running her finger along each crease and fold, absorbed in a minute inspection.

"Rhoda Lawson," rang out a sharp voice on the still room, "put that elephant down on the desk and stand away from it!"

Rhoda started violently, then smiled in mock surprise.

"Well, if it isn't our little red-headed file clerk!"

"Red-headed is right!" retorted Anne. "Put that elephant down, I say!" Her heart was hammering, but she held the revolver steady. There was no time to lose!

"Don't be childish, Anne!" Rhoda's fingers curled about the morsel of ivory.

Anne's hand rose.

"See this?" significantly.

Rhode flushed, then paled, and put the elephant down on the desk beside her.

"Really, I wouldn't have thought it of our little fire-eater!" She laughed nervously. "You want to get in on the haul, of course. You know how precious this little white elephant is, don't you, my dear? Why Ming Low was so anxious for it above all the rest? George's Chinaman knows, all right, and will pay us well. Not for nothing did George wait all this time for that string of five elephants! And this little ivory boy must be delivered to-night, Anne."

"Yes, to Ming Low," said Anne, her golden eyes like agate beneath the golden lashes. The gun in her hand was forcing the other backward toward the door of the coat closet.

"George will pay you well, Anne," said Rhoda persuasively, her nostrils quivering faintly with suppressed fury.

"This elephant belongs to Ming Low, and to Ming Low it is going," repeated Anne, "to-night!"

"You don't dare!" Rhoda snarled, changed amazingly from the beautiful patrician girl who was Warren Colby's secretary. "Others in Chinatown know of the arrival of that ivory elephant. Picked men are watching

every entrance to Ming Low's street for Warren Colby, knowing that he was to deliver it to-night. You know, perhaps, what that means?" She paused for the chill of fear to go over Anne's face. "Better travel with us, Anne! It will mean a thousand or so. And you're not above getting something for jewelry, George says."

"Get into that closet," ordered Anne icily, "and close the door."

The closet door closed upon a face darkly furious. Anne twisted over the key. Rhoda Lawson was her prisoner!

NOW she must fly! George Piteau would be here any instant. She snatched up the little elephant and ran for the doorway.

There he was, coming into the entrance! She crouched with stilled breath into the darkness behind a pillar. He could have touched her as he passed! And inside of five minutes he would release Rhoda and be after her! She fled along the dimly lit pavements.

What should she do? The fear that Rhoda had anticipated coursed now with all its icy chill up and down her spine. She glanced into the narrow street that led upward into Chinatown—Chinatown, with its gilded pagoda roofs and flowered balconies, with its glitter and gleam, its dark cobbled alleyways. A man watching every opening to Ming Low's street for Warren Colby, waiting to rob, murder, anything for the little ivory elephant which the whole underworld of Chinatown knew had arrived from China.

Anne knew the street where Ming Low was supposed to live, a quiet street of sunken doorways not far from the glittering Red Pagoda. If they were watching it for Warren, then they would never think of her! Could she—would she be brave enough to deliver the elephant to Ming Low to-night? She must!

As Anne turned into the dark cobbled street she glanced fearfully about, her imagination visioning the dangers lurking in the dingy wells of stairways leading down into the doorways below the sidewalk. She was not afraid, really—

"But, heavens, you little ol' elephant," she whispered, her hand moving up to her breast to reassure herself that it was still there, "you're one powerful nuisance. If I ever get you home to your daddy—"

Her breath rose as she saw a Chinese in a faded jacket entering the narrow street ahead of her. He was walking slowly, aimlessly, but she saw that his eyes were upon her—little gimlet black eyes that never left her face—

Another Chinese, from the alleyway, with the same quiet, faded garb—another and another—they were entering from all sides, it seemed.

Wasn't she almost to Ming Low's doorway? These men were nothing, going along about their business. She only imagined they were watching, watching with their horrible little gimlet eyes—

A light over an entrance a short distance ahead drew her, a flight of stairs leading to a door at the bottom. If she could get there before they reached her, passed her—a violent shudder went over her. They would never pass her! It was absolute folly for her to have come! Ming Low, her frantic thoughts whirled, must be right here—right here somewhere. The men—she saw them through a blur—were closing in about her! Anne slipped down the dusty stairway—realized too late that she was wrong!

With appalling silence the door at the bottom opened. A hand snatched at her, drawing her within, and the door closed as silently as it had opened. She was dragged along a dungeonlike way, hot and fetid with the odor of dried fish and decaying vegetables.

A scream broke from the girl's lips, and a fishy hand clamped over her face, the horrible nails cutting into her cheeks. She was being smothered. She fought and twisted in a tempest of elemental terror; felt a sweetish drowsiness overcoming her brain—

Faintly, on the far edge of consciousness, Anne heard a hoarse shout, a groan, and the scaly hands fell away.

Other arms, catching her up, flying onward—

ARMS like iron bands—Anne awoke foggily, fighting at them, sobbing in terror.

"It's all right now, dear, don't struggle," lips murmured at her ear.

She lay trembling, catching back the sobs. Had she really heard that voice, or had it been only a beautiful dream? She opened her eyes the barest way; then they flew wide.

She was in some sort of a sumptuous Chinese living room, lying on the softest downy couch in the world. And arms—Warren Colby's arms—were about her—

"You shouldn't have done it, Anne!" His face was strained and white. "When I think of what might have happened if Ming Low hadn't had his men planted everywhere, watching those highbinders!" He caught her closer, and her senses swam. But, of course, it was only his fear for her!

Ming Low was standing at a teakwood table near by, looking down at the tiny elephant they had rescued. He turned it carefully, running a long finger nail into one of the creases in the fat little throat. The crease began to open!

From its secret hiding place in the elephant's throat, Ming Low took a superb rounded stone of carved jade. He held it delicately in his fingers for Anne and Warren to see.

"Its rare fineness makes its intrinsic value immense," he remarked in his stately way of speaking, "but being the talisman of our family for seven dynasties, it has even more value to many in Chinatown than its appearance shows. I have been watching for it ever since I learned that George Piteau's agents had stolen it from my family in China. That night at the Red Pagoda when Piteau showed interest in only two of the five carved elephants"—Ming Low's narrow black eyes betrayed a glint of humor—"he did not know, perhaps, that I was aware of the secret place carved sometimes in the small middle elephant."

There was the sound of a scuffle in the entry hidden behind a dragon screen. George Piteau, held by two Chinese, appeared in the doorway. His dapper form was disheveled from the rough handling he had received.

"Don't let her fool you!" he cried, glaring at Anne. "She was trying to get away with the elephant. She hid it in the files—Miss Lawson caught her. She has a weakness for rare gems and ivory. When I took over Seaview for the creditors I discovered she'd stolen a valuable matrix chain from the Dalton Garrett collection."

"You're lying!" Warren Colby strode up to him. "You know you're lying, you blackguard!"

Ming Low spoke to the two Chinese: "Now that George Piteau has walked into our hands, take him to the officers waiting outside. He knows I

have been watching every movement of his for the past year, and have plenty to convict him on. It is regrettable that Miss Lawson soiled her fingers with one of the most unscrupulous gem smugglers that ever troubled China."

When she was alone with Warren Colby and Ming Low again, Anne found it suddenly difficult to speak, her heart had begun pounding so.

"But I did take the matrix chain!" she brought out in a small voice. "I pawned it. I had to have something to live on until I landed a job!"

Warren was looking at her, his eyes gleaming with the same strange tenderness that she had noticed that night at the Red Pagoda!

"You pawned the necklace that you loved—of course you did, gallant little Anne Brent—Garrett!" he said, low-voiced. "You had a perfect right to do anything you chose with it. Your father always showed it with his own wonderful collection, it was so oddly beautiful, but it was yours to do with as you liked. He told George Piteau that every time Piteau tried to buy it. But after the stock crash and your father's death, when you did not know which way to turn, Piteau thought it a good chance to get his dirty hands on it! He tried to frighten you into putting it with the collection that went to the creditors; then he was going to sneak it out to keep himself."

"I had no papers to prove it was mine," Anne returned faintly. "When George Piteau threatened to have me arrested I was frightened to death!"

But how did Warren Colby know all this about her? Her head was beginning to spin.

Lilee Chong came in just then with a pot of steaming tea.

"Tell her," Warren commanded softly, "that we'd like to have her out at Seaview again. She was a pretty good little maid always, wasn't she, Anne?"

"But I—I—" Anne choked on the tea, and Warren had to rescue it, "thought that Rhoda—"

"Did you, sweetheart?"

Ming Low, bent over examining the elephant, could not hear.

"You were blind, that's all. You thought I didn't know who you were that day you came last fall in your little black dress, so sad and frightened looking. But I did, all right." His eyes dreamed over the golden freckles that flecked a small nose. "I've loved you ever since—a certain afternoon at Seaview." He chuckled tenderly at her mystification. "I'd been out to buy from your father the jade and amber necklace, and you came galloping down the driveway on your horse and almost ran over me."

She had come home from college for the week-end, and was in blue jeans, her hair an aura of tumbled gold about her warm little face. She had never thought he would remember glimpsing her just that once!

"Ever since," Warren laughed, "I have wanted a horse. Will you let me have a horse, Anne?"

"Yes," she sighed, giving a little grin. "And I've saved up enough to get my matrix chain back again, seeing that you think it would look well on me!"

A benign smile flickered over Ming Low's usually calm and impassive countenance.

"And I shall desire," he said as he set the little elephant onto its feet, "to give as a wedding present the five carved elephants which so faithfully brought the talisman of my family's good fortune."

"Mum, mail this, before I change my mind. It's to tell him I don't want to be engaged any more"

An Offer of Marriage

By BERTA RUCK

LITTLE, independent Frankie Carter had never expected to find a young man she cared for. But if she did, she had always said she would be perfectly willing to tell him she loved and wanted to marry him, whether he "spoke" or not.

Then she met Robert Sevening—accidentally, on the train she took to business every day. She believed he was a traveling salesman; she did not know he owned the Beauty Parlor where she worked, and dozens of others like it. A client of her employer asked Frankie to travel abroad with her as companion. Just on the eve of sailing the girl learned she had come into money, left her by an old great-aunt who had been a fanatic on the subject of temperance. If Frankie ever touched liquor she would forfeit her inheritance—a matter of forty thousand dollars.

In Austria she and Mme. Griggs meet with young Sevening, and the girl and the man have an ideal week together—ideal except that he never declares his love. Frankie thinks he is too poor to marry, so tells him of her money. Still he does not propose, so

she now thinks he is too proud to ask her to marry him, since she is better off than he. So, on the last evening they are to spend together in enchanted Austria, as they walk together in a pine wood above the town, she tells him that she loves him and would be glad to marry him.

Then three things seemed to happen at once.

CHAPTER XII

A MAN'S ANSWER

THE first thing was that Frankie was inwardly, idiotically scolding herself. "Oughtn't to have said 'Too glad to marry you.' 'Glad' would have been ample."

The second thing was hearing that low-pitched, vibrant, masculine voice—Sevening's voice—say promptly: "Splendid. Thanks, Frankie. I'm only too pleased you like me well enough to marry me. So that's settled."

The third thing was the principal thing. By the light of a courting firefly which hovered past, *Frankie saw the look that had come into his face.*

It told her all, turned her to ice.

Quite possibly the girl would have sensed what a brick she had just dropped, even without the look. That, however, was unmistakable. Plainly as a sign in electric lights, it said: "What have we here? An Offer of Marriage? From the girl to the man? From this girl? To me? How do I get out of this?"

She saw that. Then she heard Sevening's "Splendid," and the rest of it.

What had apparently happened was that he had accepted her. What had really happened was refusal.

Next he took a step toward her. Frankie knew what that meant! The obvious thing that people do, after they get engaged, is to kiss. Often, of course, before they become engaged. However, never mind that. Sevening hadn't. "That," thought Frankie wildly, "might have shown me. Well, it didn't. Anyhow, I can't now—not now, oh, at this moment—it would be too awful—too ghastly a contrast from what I imagined—"

Up from that valley rose the faint, musical sound of that church clock, chiming twice.

"Half past! Oh," exclaimed Frankie, turning, "I promised Mme. Griggs I'd be in before half past ten."

"That's only half past nine."

She thought: "What, only that? Only half an hour since we were looking down into the valley from the other side of the wood, and he was saying, *'Nine o'clock. By this time tomorrow night I'll be on my way to Switzerland, and you to Paris and home.'* Since then this frightful thing has happened! I've ruined everything. He at least thought I was a nice little friend; now he thinks I'm the world's shameless minx, and everything is spoiled forever. Can't get it unsaid. Never go back to half an hour ago. Only half past nine!"

"Oh, but I say, let's go down, shan't we?" she took up, all animation. "It's beginning to get chilly and dewy and damp. Come on, I'll race you."

And she began to speed downhill as if wolves out of the forest were at her heels, rather than the man of her life.

Quite a creditable laugh he achieved as he sped down the hill after her, protesting—"Here, mustn't round off a delightful evening with an accident! Don't go spraining your ankle to celebrate our engagement!"

But he had had the shock of his life.

Any one might be sorry for the young man, as he kept his voice delighted, all the while he inwardly cursed himself. *Ass,* to allow this girl to imagine he'd ever wished—what at this moment Robert Sevening thought was the very last thing he ever had wished.

She had said: "*I am not a fool, I can see you like and admire me—*" and such is the mind of man that at the words, all his genuine attraction to Sunshine Girl had gone from him with the swiftness with which a skylark—only now caroling in the blue—drops to the muddy earth.

But the only thing to be done, he considered, was to come over all proud and glad, and not allow her to imagine he was not.

Anybody ought to be sorry for him!

But they ought to be even sorrier for little Frankie, dashing before him along the street and through the hotel door. She was telling herself: "They say a woman's 'No' means 'Yes'; well, here's a man's 'Yes' that meant 'No.' I've brought this on myself. Losing everything, ruining everything! *Now* what am I to do?"

Up the wooden stairs she pelted, to her clean and primitive bedroom, with no more tender leave-taking between her and the man to whom she had proposed marriage than: "Good night, good night! We have to start so early to-morrow. I'm not going to stay up another minute—"

THEN such a night as Frankie had never known, she who was usually happily asleep the moment her head touched the pillow!

She leaned out of her bedroom window and stared over the pointed roofs opposite, up past the darkling hill, the fringe of pine forest, up into the night sky, brilliant with stars.

This night was following what should have been the birthday of her life. "Celebrating our engagement," he had said. Yes, she was engaged to be married, and to the adored Striped Scarf. What ought she not to have felt!

Misery and shame were what she did feel. Through the silent hours misery and shame fought each other for the upper hand.

Shame! What had she done? What could he have thought of her? That look of consternation on his face had been enough to make any girl wish to sink into the ground, and to let woodland moss meet over her head and cover her from sight forevermore. Misery, to think that, after all, *he hadn't cared.* All a mistake, what she had dreamed during these enchanted evenings! *What* must he have thought of her? Oh, shame! Marvelous of him, seeing what he must think of her, to pull himself together, to be so incredibly decent! That was the worst of it. It was going to make her care for him more than ever—when she thought she'd reached the limit of caring. But since *he* did not care, oh, misery!

In the night sky the stars paled. The clock in the pointed church spire chimed at intervals into the meditations of a most miserable little American girl, who leaned from the open window of an Austrian inn, asking herself: "What am I to do?" A night breeze stirred in her rumpled gold hair. She wondered: "Should I tell him I was kidding? 'Surely you saw that? It was a joke, not in the best of taste, perhaps, but to see how far I could get you going, Mr. Sevening!'"

No, no, that wouldn't do. A joke? She gave a little shudder—it was also partly a shiver, because here she was, leaning from a midnight window in her flimsiest chiffon nightie, and chilled to the bone. Finally she turned to her bed, and slipped under the plump linen muffin which is the Austrian idea of bedclothes. "Ah—" she sighed.

She had thought of it now; not much of an excuse, but better than none.

She decided to tell him, with a light laugh: "Aha! I've won my bet. Weeks before I left home, George bet me ten dollars that I hadn't the nerve to propose to a man. *Now* I can tell George that I picked on you, and proposed, Mr. Sevening, and you thought I meant it! And now I'll buy you a cocktail for helping me win my bet!"

Yes, this was what she would say in the morning. In this decision the worn-out child slept.

OF course, she overslept.

The chambermaid was knocking at her door; sun streamed dazzlingly into her room.

Frankie had to dash through her toilette and to pelt downstairs into the dining room, a long, whitewashed place decorated with chamois-horns and greenery. Here, among other tourists, she found the two members of her party already halfway through their breakfast of coffee, whipped cream, butter, crescent-shaped rolls and cranberry jam. They were talking, laughing together. Frankie was at their table before they saw her. As Sevening sprang to his feet, Mme. Griggs turned to the girl a face quite radiant under the black mushroom hat and the new silver hair.

"Why, honey! What is this I hear? What has your beau been taking the opportunity to spring on me? Not, I may add, that it's a great surprise—"

"Oh—" broke from Frankie. So that thin story about proposing for a bet had been taken out of her hands? She couldn't produce it now in the face of Mme. Griggs's congratulations. She looked up into the newly-shaven baffling face of her "beau." "You told her—"

"Yes. I knew you wouldn't mind my breaking the good news to Mme. Griggs," said Striped Scarf heartily. "And, by the way, to save time and explanations, Frankie, I've already cabled your father."

"To dad?" (Oh, why, why had he been in such a hurry?)

"Yes, to Mr. Carter. Then I've sent off a couple wires to Zurich and Paris. I'm postponing what I had to do there, so that I travel back with you. If I may?"

"Marvelous," exclaimed Frankie.

Her small face lighted up as if she were rehearsing for the cinema and the producer had barked: "Register radiant joy, girl, can't you? Register rapture!"

Upon seeing this Sevening, the engaged man, thought, "Well, I'm glad *somebody's* pleased. At least I needn't show her what *I* feel."

The engaged girl was thinking, "At least I needn't show him what I *feel!*"

Two days later they sailed for home together.

CHAPTER XIII

REGISTERING RAPTURE

SEVENING'S signet ring shone on her finger. He had wanted to drive straight from the dock to Cartier's, and to choose "a proper engagement ring." Terribly decent he

had been to her all the way over! Carefully he had worked to make her feel that there was nothing odd in the whole situation! No use. "All this is artificial," Frankie thought wildly. "It is like nibbling wax fruit when you're hungry. Awful." As for the ring, the idea was a knife in her heart. Choosing a ring, which should be the first of the most delightful shoppings of a woman's life—"Oh, is there any hurry?" she'd said. "Hadn't we better get straight home?"

"Just as you like, Frankie."

"Thanks awfully; *I* should like straight home."

An excellent show the little creature had put up.

. "Here we are," she had called gayly in the little hall, which seemed to have shrunk. (All the rooms seemed to have shrunk badly, after the recent Ritzing.) She beamed proudly up at the tall young man who followed her in, as delighted she faced the laughing chaff of her family.

"Well, Frankie. So *you've* been and gone and done it," was dad's greeting; another knife into his daughter, who had indeed done it.

Mum flung her arms round Frankie. "How long has this been going on?"

Promptly came Sevening's good-natured: "Well, quite a time, really, but it wasn't until the night before we came away that I induced Frankie to *say* she'd marry me!"

Frankie darted a passionately grateful glance at him over Mum's shoulder.

He did not see it. He was patting the dogs.

Her mother said little; a record for Mum; truly Mum must be overjoyed!

Win was touchingly sympathetic.

"*Terribly* pleased, darling," she whispered. "You're the lucky one of the family, aren't you!" ("*Lucky*," thought the wretched Frankie.) "All that money, and now *this*. And of course," Win added wistfully, "you won't have to wait for years before you can get married."

Frankie remembered to smile. *Married!* Yes, that would be the next thing. It could and should have been all so different.

It was the most ghastly home-coming she'd ever known! Engaged to be married, and to the one man who had ever thrilled her. Yet it was the world's wash-out—

Striped Scarf had become engaged to her out of pity; it was a dust-and-ashes-and-cardboard engagement.

But Frankie determined not to let her fiancé down; to help *him* to play up. And she carried it off so successfully that Robert Sevening himself, sitting at supper in the bosom of the family, was taken in by the girl's high spirits.

He also imagined that Frankie was taken in by his own manner. For, just as Frankie was playing a girl whose dreams have come true, so Sevening played the part of a man proud and happy because he has got away with the One Girl in the World.

He thought: "Here's a lesson to any man about what he may be letting himself in for when he gets himself invited home to supper by some pretty little piece he's traveled to town with for a week or two. Last time I was here I was calling her 'Miss Carter.' And *now!*"

She thought: "The first time he was here it was all so lovely. Who would have imagined that the next time I'd be wishing I was dead?"

Then came a thought that they shared: "Thank Heaven there's not going to be much of this at first. He's going away again in a week or two!"

For he had told her he traveled for his firm, and had to go West very soon.

Mrs. Carter looked hard at her newly engaged daughter. Frankie's eyes, registering rapture, were brilliant as jewels; her cheeks were as flushed as those of a teething baby. This made her look more than pretty, but little Mrs. Carter didn't like the look.

"Mrs. Carter," took up Robert Sevening, at the first pause in the family buzz, "I'm afraid I *have* to go rather early, because of getting some letters off to Paris in the morning—"

Mrs. Carter looked at Frankie. Frankie, although she had been thinking, "I hope he goes early—oh, I hope he doesn't stay on and on," suddenly felt a turn in one of those knives. He wanted to get away early? He couldn't bear to stay?

But, looking at his smile across the table, Frankie realized that though any other awful thing might happen, never, never, by hint or look, would Striped Scarf give her away. "*Angel,* I'd die for him," she wildly thought. "Yet, all I've done is get him engaged against his will, and bored to tears."

BEFORE he left, Robert asked for an interview with his prospective father-in-law, and was led into Mr. Carter's uncomfortable den.

"Er, Mr. Carter—" he began.

At the same time Frankie's father began: "Er, Sevening—"

Both then said: "I *beg* your pardon," at once, and the pause seemed endless.

Sevening then murmured something about appreciating his welcome, and added that he had said nothing about the financial side—

"Er, no, I haven't. No, of course, I haven't. But I will," said Frankie's father. "I'm not much of a hand at discussing— I shan't be able to do a thing for my daughter—"

Hastily young Sevening put something in about not expecting it.

"No, but fortunately my girl has come in for a bit of money."

"Yes, so I heard." Robert Sevening tried to forget when and how he had heard from little Frankie that she had money. He'd thought: "An ugly thing to think of her." But it had been true! The girl *had* wanted him to know she was eligible. And when even that had not brought him up to the scratch *she* had come up to it— The whole affair was to him, as he put it to himself, a bad show. He felt chilled, bored, and impatient for the time when he could make his escape.

"Mr. Carter, I ought to let you know that I am in a position to marry. But it's remarkably nice of you to take me on trust. You haven't even asked me what I do, nor what I've got."

"No, well, I suppose you'll tell me now, won't you? Frankie said something about your being a traveling man. What do you travel for?"

"Cosmetics; powders and lotions, that sort of thing. Lately, I've been interested in face cream."

"Some of these productions are small gold mines, I understand," observed Frankie's father to the young owner of Beauty Shops in every European capital. "No doubt they keep quite a lot of fellows going. Never struck me before to inquire what any of you got."

"I pay fifty dollars a week and expenses," said Robert Sevening, "to each of my salesmen."

"Fifty dollars a week? *That's* useful," said Frankie's father, impressed. "I'm glad there's nothing to worry about, financially, then. So that's that."

"No, not quite," Sevening put in. "I can't keep you in the dark."

Frankie's father looked slightly uneasy. "In the dark about what?"

Said the young man who had been regarded as a "catch," on the strength of fifty dollars a week—"I must tell you that I am rather—well, *considerably* better off than that."

"*Better* off than fifty a week and expenses?" Mr. Carter took out his pipe and stared. "You said—"

"You misunderstood me. I said that's what I pay my men," young Sevening explained. Quickly — feeling the whole time something of a fool—Frankie's *fiancé* went on to explain to Frankie's astounded parent the facts; how he had built up, out of sundry feminine frivolities, such as scented face lotion and colored powder puffs, a solid masculine success, and that he owned, not only *Cythera's,* where Frankie had worked, but also the Paris place, its branches in Nice, Cannes, Monte Carlo, Vichy—the establishment in Berlin—and those little new ventures in Venice, Budapest and Vienna. In each of which it seemed, somehow, impossible *not* to make money. It took a little time to make this clear to Mr. Carter. All the time his family had been growing up, life had been a struggle to keep ends meeting. Dazed, Frankie's father heard Frankie's Choice talking of "turnovers." Lord, he must be a millionaire!

Yet he was so *decent.* Quite unspoiled. Simple as Win's boy friend, thought the father of the family. So unlike one's ideas of millionaires.

"It wouldn't be human not to feel pleased you're so well off," remarked Mr. Carter finally, still looking dazed.

Sevening, rather apologetic, added: "Now, while we're on the subject, there's something else, if you don't mind, that I wanted to say."

"Anything you like. Go ahead."

"Your daughter has not an idea of the circumstances," announced young Sevening. He smiled; the first time he had wanted to that evening. "Frankie thinks I'm traveling in—well, I don't believe she even knows that. She never asked me. She thinks I haven't got much to turn round on." His smile grew broader. Frankie still thought he was hard up! It was the *one* encouraging factor! "I've never let on," he said boyishly.

Frankie's father laughed aloud.

"When are you going to spring the news on her?"

"Er, not yet."

"Mean you're going to *marry* her on false pretenses?"

"No. But I shan't say anything until I get back again from the West. In, say, a week. Until then, if you don't mind, I'd like this to be just between ourselves."

"Of course, my boy. Well." Carefully dad got up from the chair which had been relegated to his den because it had a mended back. "I take it that's all we have to discuss? Don't know that I'm prepared for more surprises." They faced each other—the two men of Frankie Carter's life! Her father, lean in his shabby serge, gray at forty-five, worn with keeping up appearances and putting a brave face on to poverty; her promised husband, in the prime of his youth, well-but-not-painfully-well dressed, with thoughts about his engagement that slightly clouded his clear glance.

"Nothing else to break to me? Never been in a madhouse, have you?" Mr. Carter gave a friendly look at the pleasant, manly, and eminently sane young face before him. "Nor in jail?"

"Never. But— Imagine, I'd forgotten that. I *have* been arrested!"

HIS telling this story took up five more minutes; while Frankie in the living room chattered to the others. With every minute she felt herself nearer some frightful breaking point.

She told herself: "This awfulness I've brought down upon my own head. Just because I couldn't bear his *not* asking me— Why, however awful I'd have felt as soon as I realized he never would, it would have been *nothing* compared to this! I feel fifty times worse than death." In spite of the steam heat, and her scorching flush, she shivered.

"Mum! Tell me what you all thought when the cable came?"

"We were delighted."

"Why so cold?"

"Cold? *Darling!*"

But Frankie had noticed that Mum was the one member of the family who had not been enthusiastic about the engagement. Did Mum see anything odd about this? No! *Outwardly* it was so very much all right; there was nothing to show that the girl was miserable and humiliated.

Ah! At last there was the sound of the den's door opening; dad's laugh, dad's: "Well, well! *Shall we join the ladies?*"

But as they came in Sevening announced he had to go at once.

Frankie, who had been feeling chilled to the bone, now felt chilled to the soul. Not one moment alone?

He added that he was catching the last train; was Frankie too tired to walk with him as far as the corner?

The inconsistent Frankie felt even more appalled over the thought: "Now I'll *have* to be alone with him!"

But she leaped briskly up and called the dogs. The presence of dogs on a walk puts an end to the possibility of rational human conversation. How Frankie traded on the fact! When she was not shrieking: "Patricia! Patricia!" she was asking. Slam how he dared? Anything, anything rather than talk or listen to the man at her side, who had become a stranger—and who was yet so unutterably dear.

"I'll write," he promised. "And ring up the moment I am back. Er— you might let me have a little line?"

"What about? Won't you be late?"

"Oh, about anything. And good night."

He put both hands lightly on her shoulders, stooped, waited for her to raise her little face in assent.

In that flash Frankie thought: "He's going to kiss me good night; a dreadful duty kiss! No, *thanks.*"

"Good night, good night," she cried most gayly, and in one second his hands seemed to be not on her slim, warm shoulders, but on cold, damp night air. Already from yards down the street came her insistent call: "Run, there's your train! You'll *lose* it! Dogs, come in! Dogs!"

With brighter eyes, more vivid cheeks, Frankie dashed back into the hall. Dad began: "Well, did you—"

He stopped. He was only just in time to catch her in his arms.

"*What's the matter—? Frankie!*"

CHAPTER XIV

WISDOM OF THE DOVE

WITHOUT knowing quite how she got there, Frankie found herself in bed, in her own little bedroom, where she'd slept since she was twelve.

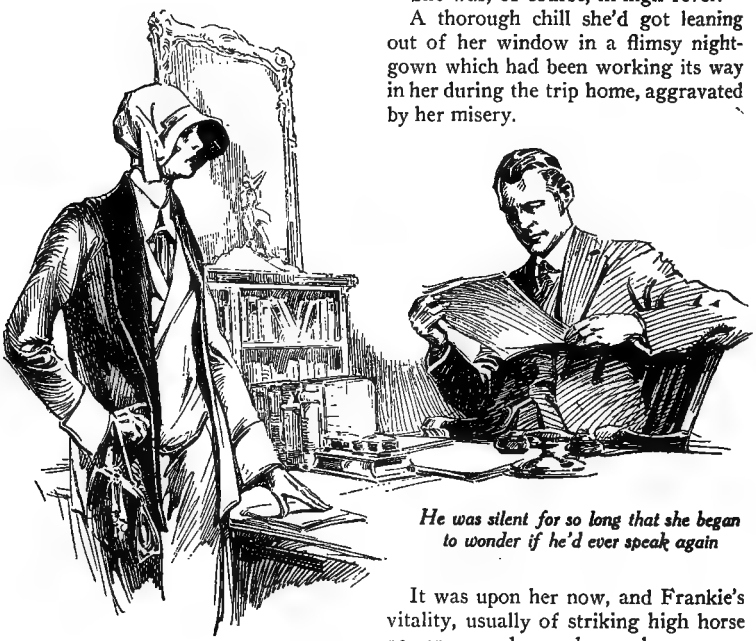
Strange, strange. It dipped and tilted, as the stateroom did on the sea voyage. It swung; it seemed to loop as no airplane had looped before. Suddenly it became pink-and-white, luxurious, and with a white door opening into a tiled bathroom.

"*How* funny," she exclaimed aloud. "Haven't we left Paris? Is this the Ritz? Or where am I?"

Somebody said: "Good Lord!" And no wonder. For now the room was behaving in the maddest manner, swinging and twisting, and transforming itself to that room in the Austrian inn with scrubbed and snowy floor boards, a lithograph of a blue-robed, gold-crowned Virgin and wide-open windows on to purple skies alight with stars? or fireflies? or both? Anyhow, dancing lights that presently turned into faces again, the lights, the faces, faces, lights, lights, faces, lights, darkness—

She was, of course, in high fever.

A thorough chill she'd got leaning out of her window in a flimsy nightgown which had been working its way in her during the trip home, aggravated by her misery.



He was silent for so long that she began to wonder if he'd ever speak again

It was upon her now, and Frankie's vitality, usually of striking high horse power, was down, down, down.

Fever took hold, and raged for forty-eight hours.

Presently the doctor said he thought he had better send in a nurse.

Mrs. Carter stubbornly refused any assistance.

It was, as Frankie afterward acknowledged, just as well that nobody but Mum came into the sick room during those hours when her temperature was up and while consciousness had left her.

The girl raved incessantly in delirium, calling aloud in a shrill, girlish

voice, many things which would never, in health, have passed her lips.

She cried: "Why doesn't he want to be engaged to me?"

This was where Mum said quickly to Win: "Go out, dear, go to work as usual. Nobody can do anything; I'm perfectly all right."

She was. When illness was in the house Mum ceased to be the beloved goat; she became a tower of strength. Her little, absurdly young and pretty face altered into gravity and efficiency.

Having swiftly composed the room and the bed, she sat there, as quiet as a piece of furniture. One would think, from the peacefulness of Mum's expression, that there was nothing disturbing going on. Yet there, in her small bed with the new pillows and the new white frilly pillowcases, tossed her youngest daughter, gabbling like a stranger.

"Don't you think I'm attractive? Don't you?"

More vivid than from any rouge were Frankie's lips and cheeks; there are no crystalline drops on the market which can give to eyes the jewel-like brilliance which was Frankie's as she raved, in the fever which had broken down all barriers.

"*Can't* be because you don't think I'm pretty! You said I looked a picture. That night at dinner you said it. That night when I had raspberry juice to drink— Thirsty, thirsty," she suddenly broke off.

Mum, a very quiet and swiftly moving Mum, brought a glass.

"Take it away, it's gin and It!"

"No, it isn't," said Mum, as cheerfully and quietly as if the heart in her breast were not being twisted like a rag in the hands of a scrubwoman. "It's only barley water, Frankie, with a little lemon. Try it, darling."

Frankie drank, went on gabbling.

"I was afraid it was wine or spirits. You know I mustn't touch any. Else I'll lose my money. That's the condition."

"I know, darling; I know."

"*He* doesn't know, or he would never have tried to make me taste glow-worm out of his glass? 'Glow-worm' is the name of that greeny stuff at the Café Madrid.

"That was a wonderful evening. All those evenings were wonderful.

"Couldn't bear to come to the end of them and to think there would never be any more, and all because of *money!*"

CALL up the scene; pretty, cheaply furnished, suburban room of a business girl. Small single bed with the white frilly pillow against which the rumpled gilt head, the flushed face of the girl who ceaselessly, ceaselessly talked.

"Be a little quiet, darling. Quiet for a moment."

"I can't. I must tell him. No need to spoil people's lives because of a lack of frankness. If he won't, I'll have to tell him frankly myself. Why not? Do you know that proverb: '*Those that ask, shan't have. Those that don't ask, don't want*'? So irritating! Takes you nowhere—so thirsty!"

As she drank she had an interval when she saw clearly her father's face, looking unutterably worried, framed in the door. She heard him say to Mum: "What about that young man? Ought we to let Sevening know?"

She heard her mother's gay laugh. "Dear, don't be so absurd. Let him know what? That Frankie's got a chill? The doctor says she'll be quite all right when the fever goes down. What *is* the good of young men when

there's illness in the house? What could he do? He shall come the minute Frankie's well. Besides, he's away now."

Dad said helpfully: "I'd know how to get hold of him. Through Frankie's place. They'd know at the shop."

Frankie thought: "How absurd of dad to think of that. How on earth should Madame at Cytherea's know where Striped Scarf is to be found?" She laughed, a shaky little laugh; then she was off again. She cried out: "He wouldn't *come* if he knew I was ill in this room with all the pictures moving about! He doesn't want to be near me. He hates being engaged to me. Hates it."

"*Go* away, dear," said the voice of Frankie's mother, very decidedly, to Frankie's father, and then he too disappeared, leaving Frankie's mother to listen to her child gabbling on.

She cried: "If it's because you think there is no money, don't worry. There's quite enough to get married on. Forty dollars a week. Mum and dad got married on much less than that, mush less. Ask them. People used to. You keep yourself. Perhaps you say: 'But not enough to keep a wife too.' But it's what I'm trying to tell you, Rupert." Then her voice dropped. "Why do I call you Rupert, when it isn't your name? Robert's your name, Robert. Rupert's the name of another man. That nice southern boy. He wanted to make me an offer of marriage. If I'd let him. So, you see. People *do* like me well enough to want to marry me; that's why I don't mind telling you. Look at all these fireflies. Imagine that each of them has got a firefly sweetheart, I suppose there isn't such a thing as an insect being an old maid? Is it only human beings that have unhappy love stories?

"How shocked Mum would be! Do you know, Mum is shocked at almost everything? People had to be, in her generation, and they got into the habit and they can't not be. Perfectly horrified, Mum would be, if she had a notion of how I feel. Perfectly horrified. But you aren't. You're modern. What was I going to say to you? I forget. I'll think of it in a minute. Oh, of course. I can *see* you like and admire me! And this is such a romantic place. City of Enchantment."

Then loudly and clearly: "Yes, what I was going to tell you was this: I'd be only too glad to marry you!"

And when she came to herself she'd not an idea of one word of all she'd said.

"Have I been ill?" she asked—days afterward—years afterward it seemed to them all.

"My head!" She tried to lift it. "My head feels as if a heavy bowlder had been fixed on to my neck."

She listened to the encouraging murmurings of her family; she smiled up at the doctor and his breezy suggestions about something to eat. "Eat?" snapped Frankie, making a little face at him. "Men's one idea, from the cradle to the grave, whatever else happens. *What is there to eat?*"

"Ah, you're better, young lady," he smiled, scribbling a prescription. "Now then. I'll get that made up and sent over at once. All you have to do is lie still and think about nothing but getting well again."

Frankie could manage the lying still part of the business. She lay, looking like some small and delicate little lad. She lay, thinking. Anybody can guess what about.

Her mother knew.

"This room looks more like a corner

of the Flower Show than anything else," Frankie said. "Who sent them?"

"Everybody who knows you," said Mum. "Those marvelous scarlet roses had 'With love and fond sympathy from Mme. Griggs and Evangeline.'" And those tulips in great sheaves from Cytherea's. Flowers up from the country, sent by Win Ronald's mother. Flowers from the girls in Win's office. The local grocer had sent flowers. Suddenly Frankie said: "There aren't any flowers from Mr. Sevening."

"Frankie!" Her mother ran to her. The helpless tears of convalescence had welled up in her eyes.

"Of course he doesn't know I've been ill. He hadn't even come back from the West. I'm not crying about that. Anyhow, I'm not crying," gasped the distracted child. Now fully awake to what had been waiting for her all the time in this sad world into which she'd emerged again, she could only fumble underneath her pillow.

Mum found a clean handkerchief. Mum, who had heard herself described as being shocked at everything, found the word to pacify and to console.

Odd as it may seem, the strain lightened from Frankie as soon as she heard her mother's quiet, matter-of-fact words. "Darling, I know what you're crying about. So unhappy about your engagement. You think he can't care for you, and that he's only engaged because you asked him to."

"You *knew?*"

"You blurted it out when you had the fever. Nobody else heard a word."

"And you?"

"I heard the whole story."

"You aren't *shocked,* Mum?"

"Nothing shocks me," retorted Mum. (With everybody else in the world.) "So it's just as well that it was only me."

"Yes," said Frankie, with a deep breath. "Extraordinary that I should feel this such a relief. Such a mercy to be able to *say* something about it. Mum, what am I to do?"

"About your engagement, darling? There is only one thing to be done," said Mum with decision. "Break it off at once."

"BREAK off my engagement?" echoed Frankie, sitting bolt upright. "Mum, I can't do that! Anything else!"

Mum sat there, all demure in a little dollar ninety-eight chintz frock she'd bought at a sale. Mum said nothing.

Frankie went on urgently to explain that whatever happened she could not possibly give up Mr. Sevening. She always called him Mr. Sevening. How could she live without him? And besides—it was not as if he didn't like her. Mum must let her explain exactly what had happened.

She talked. Mum listened calmly.

"Go on, Frankie darling," she said now and then. "Go on, my baby girl."

Drawing another long breath, Frankie went on to describe the scene in the pine wood in Austria.

"Yes, I told him! And I meant it, Mum."

"It was quite all right your meaning it, darling," Mum said softly. "But *telling* a young man *what you meant!* That was the mistake. A dreadful mistake, Frankie, even *when* one's quite sure what the young man means!"

To her daughter Mum then explained exactly the mistake that she had made in dealing with the man of her life.

He had seemed attracted at first? Yes, Mum had thought so, too.

Then came that time when he seemed to be hanging back?

All men have to go through that phase! No men really *want* to be definitely and permanently tied up in marriage. That is, not at first, Mum added hastily.

"All men," Mum said, "come to this point when they're so fond of the girl that they think—'The next thing is I'll find myself let in for asking *her to marry me!' This* is when he thinks it's ghastly, and really does look on marriage as a trap. He sees it as Good-by to All That—meaning all his fun and freedom. It's a stage, Frankie, a stage. He thinks 'I can't. I'll have to sheer off a point or two. Anyhow, I'll have to think this over.' Then there's usually an intermission, like in the theater."

"And how long," asked Frankie, punching up her pillow, "does *that* last?"

"Darling, that depends on the girl. '*Hurry no man's cattle*' is a good proverb, I always think."

(Astounding to contemplate the things which Mum had "always been thinking," during the time her daughters had imagined she spent in being shocked!) In her mild voice Mum went on: "Yes, it's in the girl's hands. *She* has to steer him over this stage. Naturally she doesn't have to *seem* to steer, any more than in dancing."

"How does she manage that? How?"

Mum sighed. "Frankie, it's strange. Here I was imagining that you and Win are clever girls—too clever, in fact. Yet, when it comes to life, you don't seem to know the simplest things. You go to all these disgraceful plays, and yet you don't know. You read all these banned books, and yet you don't know, you don't know."

"Mums, darling! It doesn't put anything in the books. Not anything that is the slightest use."

"I always *thought* that about the books," murmured Mum. "And you know what I think about the plays. I suppose I'm old-fashioned, but what I like is seeing a woman get what she wants!"

"Mum, show me how!"

"You can't *show* things like that," said Mum. "It's exactly like that new step George was trying to show you last winter. I remember he said, 'I can *do* it all right. But I'm dashed if I know *how* it is done!'"

Frankie sighed. "Then dad never came to that—that hanging back part?"

"Didn't he! Oh, yes, he did! Oh, dear, yes, he did. Every *delightful* young man does. It's only those men who are what you'd call '*washouts*,' who won't be put off, and don't want a moment to consider. I know them. I've been through those," said wicked, experienced little Mum. "Always, the young men you don't *want* come rushing. So like life!"

"I know, I know. But to get back to *Mine*, Mum, please. I thought he was so different. I mean modern—"

"What does that mean? When it comes to men? Just the difference in the clothes they wear. Otherwise, they're just the same as their fathers or grandfathers were.

"They *all* take fright at the idea of being caged up for life. If you want a robin to feed out of your hand, you mustn't frighten him by making a move toward him. If you do, away he flies."

Too true, Frankie realized. Still—

"Frankie, the principal thing is to let men think that *they've* done everything themselves."

"But you talk as if a girl couldn't be *truthful* with men—"

"I can't help that either."

"It's as if men *preferred* us to pretend."

Mum said mildly: "I didn't make men. They're like that. And very nice, when treated the right way. Look at darling George. And haven't I always been very happy with your father?"

Frankie had to laugh.

"Mum! You say you didn't make men, but don't you think your sort of woman, spoiling them and thinking they're all so desirable, helps to make them what they are?"

"You care for this one, don't you?"

There rose before Frankie's eyes the image of the one man who was as attractive as he was reliable; magnetic enough to be a flapper's idol; "man's man" enough to go down at once with dad, and the best company in the world, even if one wasn't in love with him.

"Care? *Mum!* I'm hopeless about him—crazy."

"You want him to care for you?"

"The only thing I want in the world."

"Then, Frankie darling, you've got to treat him as if he *were* a man, not some new invention like the talkies. You've got to—"

Here there was a tap at the door.

There entered a large golden basket, out of which cascaded roses—roses of the deepest red—to match the immense ribbon bow with which it was tied.

Some of that color rushed into Frankie's cheeks as the maid-by-the-day announced, from behind the offering:

"For Miss Frankie. A gentleman's just come in a car to bring them."

"Mum! Look at them! *Look* what he's brought! Oh! How *wonderful!* He's come back, and brought me these roses, and—"

The woman, grinning, held out a card. It was not the card of Mr. Robert Sevening.

"THERE'S two other gentlemen with him!" added the maid-by-the-day. "Ever so nice they are. Waiting for what Miss Frankie says."

Frankie held the card out to her mother, with a little laugh. "You *said* that, Mum: '*Always the young men you DON'T want come rushing.*'" She lay back on her pillow, slumping with disappointment. Little Mrs. Carter read the name on the card:

MR. RUPERT ALDEN.

"I'd forgotten there was such a person," went on Frankie languidly. "Kind of him to bring those!" She turned a small, unhappy profile to that costly golden basket, those gloriously fragrant red roses, which made into mere posies the sheaves of flowers which already filled her room. "Mum, do you mind going downstairs and murmuring the right things?"

Little Mrs. Carter hurried down.

She found her modest living room apparently full of men. The floor was covered with large glossy boots; windows were darkened by powerful square shoulders; heads bumped into swinging electric light fittings as all these gigantic strange men turned at Mum's greeting. Actually the small room held only two tall young fellows, with one snowy-haired elderly one.

"You'll pardon our intrusion, Miss Carter," began Grandfather Alden. "But when these boys and I heard that your sister had been so sick—"

"I haven't any sister," explained

the delighted Mum, demurely. "So kind of you to inquire after my daughter Frankie."

"Your daughter? That's *not* possible," exclaimed Grandfather.

Beaming, she begged them all to sit down, offered them cigarettes, offered them homemade wine when they refused tea, and herself accepted the tribute of their attitude that every woman was a princess in her own right.

They had, it appeared, brought something besides roses and kind inquiries: they had brought a suggestion. Grandfather unfolded it: Mme. Griggs was expecting her son Raymond and his family on their way back from China.

"And where Mme. Griggs is, there, if possible, we shall be too," said Grandfather. "I have taken one seaside house for her and another for myself and these boys. We'll be moving in on Saturday."

"Where is this place, Mr. Alden?"

"In Wetonquet, almost out on Montauk Point. Bathing, sailing, plenty of golf. The house has a good garden, too. Tennis courts; all that sort of thing. Plenty of room— Now, do think of it! Mrs. Carter, what we're coming to is this—surely, when your little Miss Frankie is better, you will be wanting to take her somewhere? Well, we thought that if you'd so far honor us as to let this be with us—!"

"Oh," began Mum, "but—"

"We should of course beg you to come with Miss Frankie. We'd do our utmost to see you were comfortable and had a good time!"

"I know, but really—"

"*Don't* refuse us," begged one of the younger Aldens. He was the taller, the more decorative, reminding Mum of the best of the young men in the advertisements for Arrow collars.

"Are you," Mum asked him, "Mr. Rupert Alden who sent in your card with the roses?"

Rupert Alden admitted this was so, and Frankie's mother told herself, "Evidently most attracted. The one Frankie was talking about when she had fever. Oh, dear! If she'd only *not* met anybody before! She'd be far, far happier with this delightful boy. 'Always the young men you *don't* want.' What a pity that it's young Mr. Sevening she wants instead of this one—he's a dear!"

"Mrs. Carter is on our side, I know," declared Rupert; indeed, that turncoat Mum was just asking herself how any woman could resist him.

"But, you know, Mr. Alden, there would be a lot of difficulties— I hardly know what to say."

"Ma'am, I will tell you—"

Before he could do so a loud barking without heralded the arrival of three more men. Into the small hall crowded dad and George, just back from the city, and the doctor.

To the last she turned. "Doctor! Don't you think it would be the best thing for Frankie to get away to the shore"—Mrs. Carter's baby-blue eyes fixed the doctor, imploring him to think so now, even if he had not thought so before—"for a change as soon as she's well enough? Yes! There! I thought you would. How lovely! Because Frankie has just had the most ideal invitation!"

"What's that?" asked Frankie's father.

He was told all about it and agreed it was the very thing the invalid ought to have—and soon!

(Frankie's mother thought: "Yes; at once; sooner, if possible! Before young Mr. Sevening gets back; that would be the ideal plan.")

In her small, fluffy head, out of which she picked daily a gray hair or so, she had arranged a different plan. Young Mr. Sevening should be set free—but only in order that things should be put on a different footing. He would come back, Mrs. Carter felt sure, but letting him go was the only way to bring him back.

Now, however, a different idea suggested itself to the little mother whose one wish was for her child's happiness.

Why try to get back that first young man?

Why not let him go altogether?

"Here is this other one; this delightful Rupert, the soul of chivalry, and nice eyes and such a determined chin, and able to afford anything a wife wanted—as well as being obviously in love with the child. Supposing Frankie came to care for him instead? *Much* the better solution!"

That was her one thought.

She gave Rupert Alden a tiny smile that meant: "*Yes! I am on your side!*" and thought, "Thank goodness Robert Sevening is away."

And just then Robert Sevening came up the front walk.

CHAPTER XV

MUM'S MIRACLES

THAT evening little Mrs. Carter felt herself called upon to perform three miracles.

The first miracle was getting rid of the Aldens without letting them realize that the young man who had just arrived was her daughter's *fiancé*.

Rupert Alden was looking at this big young New Yorker, in the soft, shapeless felt hat, the aged raincoat, and the gray flannel trousers.

Sevening was returning Rupert's glance with even more interest. Each was obviously thinking: "Who's *this* fellow? What have we here?"

"I'll have to fling myself into the breach," thought Frankie's mother. "How's Frankie?" asked Robert.

"Frankie—yes, oh, yes; she was ill—much better. A chill, nothing to be anxious about! Nothing!" She had to produce further twitters of astonishment that Mr. Sevening was back sooner than he had said; on she twittered about the beauty of Wilfred Alden's car—then about messages which were to be given to Mme. Griggs —"*So* kind of Mme. Griggs to be concerned about Frankie! . . . Yes, I've promised to ring you up, Mr. Alden! I'll ring everybody up . . . No, don't wait! don't wait! Good night. Good-by!"

"*There.*" The car was off; it had disappeared. She was free to turn and set about her second miracle.

This was to get rid of Frankie's *fiancé* without letting him see Frankie.

"I *won't* ask you in," she began instantly, smiling up into the pleasant face of this brute who had made her child suffer. "We're at sixes and sevens— Oh, the telephone! George, darling, run. Houses are too depressing, don't you think, where there's illness? Nothing but trays, and medicine bottles coming in, and plates with grape skins all over them, and having to walk on tiptoe and talk in whispers. I simply refuse to let any one in!"

How fervently she hoped Sevening would imagine that the callers who had just departed had not set foot in her hall!

Next she managed to nip in the bud dad's kindly suggestion that Frankie's young man might prefer to overlook grape skins and the necessity for hushed voices, and to take pot luck

with the family and have a look in at Frankie later. This must *not* materialize.

"I'll just come a step *with* you," Mum added, slipping a competent hand (size in gloves, five and three-quarters) into the visitor's arm.

Over her shoulder she sent a look at her husband which meant: "Let me have a little talk alone with him?"

Dad gave a friendly nod and: "See you later, Sevening."

Mum, remembering, had to skip back after him with a hurried whisper: "Frankie is not to know that the young man's here!"

"Oh, why not? . . . Oh, very well, dear."

Full of purpose—though secretly furious that she had not had time to *touch* her hair since three o'clock this afternoon, and that she was still wearing that dollar ninety-eight bargain house dress which she had put on this morning—Frankie's mother flew back to Frankie's *fiancé*.

Mr. Sevening, planted there on the pavement, still looked nonplused; even a little sulky. Worse, he did not look in any hurry to depart.

"I'm sorry I'm in the way, Mrs. Carter, but I had to find out—"

"You needn't be frightened about Frankie! She's going to be quite, quite all right in no time. Of course, she gave us rather a fright the night you left—"

"I got a fright as soon as I came back to-day. There wasn't a line from her at my club—"

"You hadn't written to her?"

"No; we left it that she'd write first. Frankie said she'd write. So I dashed down to my—to her Beauty Shoppe place. Mrs. What's-her-name, the manager, told me Miss Carter had been ill. It might have been serious, she said, but she *seemed* to think that Frankie was now well enough to see me—"

"Not," thought Frankie's mother, "if *I* know it. If Frankie sees him again she'll never have the courage to break it off. Never! Especially if she sees him looking so sorry and anxious about her. What *am* I to do? I can't tell *stories*, of course—"

Many irreproachable matrons of Mum's type avoid "telling stories" by producing a remark such as she now produced.

"You *wouldn't* like, would you, to wake her up out of a beautiful refreshing sleep?" (Frankie had not closed her eyes since breakfast time, but Mum had not said she was asleep.)

"Lord, no, wouldn't wake her for the world. Not on *any* account. Still!"

Appealingly he stared down on the ruffled fair head of Frankie's mother, that wonderful little woman! to whom he had taken such a fancy on his first visit to the family. On that first evening he had felt it was a mutual liking. But this evening—what on earth was the matter with her? All coo and no cordiality back of it. Anxious, no doubt, about the girl. Illness changes so many things. In Sevening's mind there still echoed the dread word "Serious." He had not allowed himself to think of little Sunshine seriously ill, but it had brought him flying to the scene, all the way from town in a taxi.

"You're sure you're not *keeping* anything from me, Mrs. Carter?"

"My *dear* Mr. Sevening!"

"You see, the unfortunate thing is that I'll not be able to come to-morrow," said the young man, slackening his pace. "I've got further wretched complications over my Chicago business—"

Mum cooed regret, but asked no questions.

"—so I'm having to start back to-morrow morning, taking my lawyer with me. I'm afraid it may keep us some days."

"Oh, dear. Dreadful," said Mum. To herself she thought that it was almost too good to be true. To have miles and miles, days and days, between this Source of Misery and Frankie! Splendid. Who knew what might happen before he saw her again?

SEVENING was thinking the same thing. This was certainly not his lucky day. The fact was, that after the shock of Frankie's illness he'd been taken aback by the appearance of those plutocrats in that super-car. This, of course, belonged to the fellow of whom little Frankie had spoken in Vienna. The man who was forever on the long-distance telephone. So he had turned up on Long Island, had he? Quite in order that *he* should not be let into the house. It was a different matter that he, Sevening, should not be given one glimpse of his lawful and legitimate Intended!

In short, he was as annoyed as if there had been nothing unintentional about his engagement. He had forgotten that part of it—

Mum, with a chill at her heart, noticed how reluctant he was to go. Having reached the corner of the street young Sevening was now stopping to look round.

"If I might just run back and look in for one moment, do you think?" He smiled down at her persuasively. "I swear I wouldn't wake Frankie up. If you wouldn't mind my having just one look at her, asleep?"

"Oh, but I'm afraid I would mind. I'd *so* much sooner you didn't," Mum exclaimed with fervor. "Now, I know you'll understand if I fly back now, and see about supper. Terribly sorry I'm not able to ask you in this time; must seem *so* inhospitable! You'll forgive me?"

"Oh, of course!" said young Sevening blankly.

It had not before happened to him that a woman had been really anxious to get rid of him; but he was being positively pushed off to-night by Frankie's mother. Practically shooed away by those absurd hands of hers. Lord, these tiny, shy, domesticated little she-women, what can a decent hefty man do against them?

"*Good* night," she was cooing politely and prettily.

"How long did you say you'd be away? Well, your club will always find you, won't it? Frankie shall write you a little note."

Inwardly determined what should be in this note, the little she-woman whisked back down the road to the house—and to the third miracle.

Which was, to keep Frankie from suspecting that Robert Sevening had been to see her.

Frankie, when she had seen a Moth plane struggling in the air, had—without any grounds for guessing!—known who was piloting that plane. But this time, though he had been at her very door, nothing warned her.

There, in the room filled with the scent of another man's roses, Frankie lay and congratulated herself that she had not had to cope with those Aldens.

What an endless time Mum was talking to them.

It was, of course, flattering that they had all rushed over at once in a body to inquire.

Flattery means so much to women; almost as much, indeed, as it does to men!

But flattery had no magic to keep

Frankie's thoughts from drifting back, as she lay there, to the one important thing in her life.

SHE remained full of it, even after her mother ran up again, all pink and fluttered, all full of something so different, the plan for going down to the Point, the colony of amusing people—the bathing, golf, sailing expeditions.

Frankie said, "How frightfully kind of the Aldens." And, "I told you how wonderfully kind they were." And, "*Nice* of them. Yes, of course, I'd adore to go." But all this was in a voice so—so perfunctory The voice that means a girl's heart is nowhere near this matter.

Her voice became so different when she said:

"Mum. Help me some more, to decide about—my engagement."

"Darling, it's just what I want to do."

"Yes, but Mum. You don't *really* think 'break it off,' do you?"

"I do, I do," answered Mum firmly. It was heartbreaking how the child clung to that forlorn hope. "Frankie, make up your mind that an engagement like that is no more use than a sick headache to a girl. Darling, *don't* cling to it like—like a man clinging to an old Norfolk jacket that isn't fit for him to be seen in any more! It would only make you more miserable every minute that it dangled on, and every minute of it would seem like a day in prison to poor Mr. Sevening!"

As she said this, Mum, who was only set upon her child's happiness, felt a stab of doubt.

She had seen Sevening's disconcerted, jealous glance at the young man with the swanky car. She was no longer sure. Supposing she allowed time for things to readjust themselves, might it not still come all right? Might not the child still be happy with the man to whom she had made that foolish confession, "*I'd be only too glad to marry you!*"

Ah, but how could a thing like that come right?

"Not with *that* young man," silently decided Mum. "Robert Sevening has been put off by that fatal mistake. After they were married he'd never be able to forget '*I never asked her! She asked me!*' Oh, how much better if she married the other! Even if she never became so crazily in love with Rupert, all the better. If one of the two has got to be fonder in marriage, by all means let it be the man! Better so."

A small, pitiful voice came out of the pillow into which Frankie had burrowed her rumpled gilt head.

"Very well, Mum. Will you find my fountain pen, and that writing case Mme. Griggs gave me? I said I'd write to him. I will write—and break it off."

Mum heaved a sigh of relief. Even then the tiny doubt pricked her again. Was it all for the best?

"Yes. But not now, darling. You're tired. Sleep on it, Frankie. You'll know better what to say to-morrow."

SO next morning Frankie sat up in bed with a fat pillow in the small of her slender back, and her mother's pink silk dressing jacket about her shoulders. There was a pinker flush of exertion in her cheeks, and in her eyes a light of half-desperate resolution. Finally she pushed aside the writing case of soft tooled leather which had been Mme. Griggs's present to her in the City of Enchantment and, calling for her mother, held out a

stamped, addressed and sealed envelope.

"Mum dear, will you mail this for me *at once*, please?"

"Yes, darling. Is it—"

"Yes, it is."

Mum did not ask another question, nor even give an anxious look at her child's shut little face.

She took the letter, hastened downstairs, ran out, followed by the cavorting dogs — in whom Hope rose eternal that any one setting foot outside the door was going for at least a five-mile tramp —and ran like a girl to the mail box at the corner, where she had taken leave of Mr. Sevening last night.

This was what her letter said:

"DEAR ROBERT—"

Even as she wrote that, she remembered: "I've never called him that to his face. I've never called him anything but Mr. Sevening."

She had never been going to call him anything else until she told him that her own special pet name for him was "Striped Scarf."

And it had never come to that—never would now.

DEAR ROBERT:

Perhaps you won't be much surprised to get this letter, which is to tell you that, if you don't mind, I'd like our engagement to be off. It isn't because you have not been awfully nice about it. It's simply because I've been mistaken in my own feelings. Since I've been ill *I've* thought things over and come to this conclusion. I simply can't

"Dearest, what does it matter? From the first moment we saw each other, I was yours and you were mine!"

imagine, now, why I said all that to you, abroad. As it was just before I was so ill it may have had something to do with that. Anyhow, I'm now all right again.

Please will you forget all that part of our friendship, and wash it out as if it had never been, and then we can go back to where we were before--

She thought hopelessly: "Before what? There was never a time when I didn't think that he was the only man in the world. Shall I put 'Before we met'? That's impossible, of course. The fact is, everything is impossible."

Presently she took up her fountain pen again, and finished the sentence:

—before we went abroad, which seems to be rather unsettling to some people.

I think this is all I have to say. Hoping that you have a successful trip West,

I am,
Sincerely yours,
FRANKIE CARTER.

"If I read that over again I'll never send it," thought she. "I'd have to write something over again — and goodness knows I've written *reams* since breakfast! What with the six torn-up beginnings, and then the long other screed, the one I *would* have written to him if I hadn't written this—"

CHAPTER XVI

THE OTHER LETTER

IT was perhaps just as well that the letter was to repose on the letter board in Sevening's club for a while; the hard-working young business man to whom it was addressed already had plenty on his mind.

However, the troublesome Chicago business, which had got itself into a legal tangle, was settled at last, and he was free to think of his little Sunshine Girl. Frankie's mother had sent him one reassuring wire. She was well again.

As he lunched with his friend and lawyer in a fashionable restaurant the last day of their stay, he began to think it would be rather pleasant to see Sunshine again, or even to have her sitting there with them now, her small hands curved around her glass of raspberry soda.

He leaned forward and said: "By the way, Eric, I haven't told you my news. I'm going to be married shortly."

There was a slight pause; young Holt was thinking: "Married? It's barely a month since I mentioned marriage to you, and you snapped my head off. You said you weren't thinking of marriage for years yet."

Having more tact than to remind any man of such a thing as this, Eric said quietly: "Oh. Congratulations. A bit sudden, wasn't it?"

"Oh, no! not particularly," returned the young man who had been so appallingly taken aback by those half dozen words from a girl on a night of velvet, pine-scented gloom, starred with fireflies. "Oh, no; it's been going on for some time, as a matter of fact, only I haven't said anything about it."

"Then I need not be expected to know who it is?"

"I thought perhaps you formed a guess? It is the girl who was at the Bartlett-Smiths' party, Miss Frankie Carter."

Sevening was looking straight at Eric as he spoke, thinking he would enjoy his friend's surprise. But he was scarcely prepared for the look of bewilderment that spread over that fair, sensitive, rather delicate young face of the other man.

"Don't you remember her?" said Sevening, laughing; feeling pleased with himself. "The fair-haired small girl in the lilac frock?"

"Of course I remember her perfectly well. Miss Carter. She went away to Vienna with old Mme. Griggs."

"Yes. That was when it happened. I was over there, too, you know. We came home engaged. Most unfortunately my *fiancée* caught a chill or something on the journey; she was ill for some days—"

"Yes. I knew about that," said Eric Holt unexpectedly. "I did hear that Miss Carter had been ill."

"Oh? Who told you that?"

"Mrs. Griggs—not the old lady. Evangeline. I heard from her this morning. Miss Carter's staying with them by the sea, isn't she?"

"Staying with the Griggses? *Again*. *I* hadn't heard—"

Whereat Eric looked still more bewildered. He was recalling some words in Evangeline's letter—"*And yesterday, little Frankie Carter came down in the car with Grandfather, Wilfred and Rupert. Rupert seems most attached.*"

"Robert," said Eric Holt, "have *you* met the Aldens?"

Robert sat up.

"Aldens? Automobile firm? Friends of Mme. Griggs. Yes, I met them once, Eric. Why?"

"Oh—er, I just remembered Evangeline wrote to me they motored Miss—your *fiancée*—down to a place near Montauk. Staying there to convalesce, isn't she?"

"So I understand."

This, of course, was the first Robert had heard of it. Frankie, staying down near the Point to convalesce? With all those amusing, interesting fellows? Accepting an invitation of which he had not been told? That, he thought, was her mother's doing. Her mother had arranged to get him out of the way. "I won't ask you in," little Mrs. Carter had said, and she dashed well hadn't. Pushed him out, she had, after telling him that Frankie would write. Painfully obvious it had been that he wasn't to see Frankie before he went.

Getting the idea a little late, but getting it thoroughly, Sevening told himself, "Frankie was no more asleep than I am now." A less justifiable suspicion was born at the same moment. "That little woman is all out to get her girl *well* married. An automobile firm makes a much better *parti* than the traveling salesman for which she takes me."

That got young Sevening where it hurt. It got him on his fear complex.

"The money! Her father was decent enough about that. He's kept it to himself. He's a man. But women! When they don't know I'm Cytherea's and the rest they've nothing to say to me," he thought, even in the raising and putting down of his glass.

And the girl herself? What about her? Frankie?

For the first time the echo of her words: "*I'd be only too glad to marry you,*" was music in his memory. That sounded sincere.

But supposing she *preferred* this other guy, as a guy?

He got to his feet, pushed his chair back, spoke abruptly: "Well, I suppose we can take the Knickerbocker this afternoon?"

MEANTIME Frankie should have been having the time of her life.

She was living in Luxury's lap. She was among gay, sympathetic, amusing

people. The Griggses, the Aldens, and the Raymond Griggses united to make a pet of the pretty convalescent. The weather was perfect; she had a good outfit of new and successful little frocks from Vienna; health was flowing back to her. Her hair, as Evangeline said, grew more golden as you looked, and in strong sunlight positively made you blink. She had something amusing to do from morning till night; tennis, lazing and talking, bathing, basking with a book, being taken out in Rupert's speed boat, to say nothing of listening to his bouquet-like compliments. There would have been more than compliments had she not, at his first tentative remark, replied appealingly: "Oh, but I don't want to *think* about that sort of thing. Not yet, Rupert, not yet! Can't we go on as we are?" To which he had replied: "Why, certainly, just as you like. When you want, I'll be ready enough to change. All I want is to please you, Frankie."

What could a girl ask more?

Well, it is a toss-up if the human being, crossed in love, suffers less or more among perfect surroundings.

These were perfect.

On the dust and ashes which they represented Frankie Carter put a brave face, or, rather, a gay little mask.

She had said to her kind hostess at the beginning of things, before any embarrassing inquiries could be made: "Oh, Mme. Griggs, about my engagement—"

"Why, yes, honey," began Mme. Griggs, who had foreseen that the "beau" would probably require to be invited as well, and who wondered how he would hit it off with Rupert.

"Mme. Griggs, I wanted to let you know at once that was a mistake."

"A mistake, honey?"

"Yes, Mr. Sevening and I have broken it off."

"Is that so? Well. If there's a mistake it is just as well that it should last the shortest possible time. That's all I'll say about it."

"Thank you, you are an angel," Frankie said; then she caught up a tennis racket and called out blithely to Rupert, "Coming!" and was off.

Mme. Griggs put her small be-diamonded hand up to her newly-mother-of-pearl head in bewilderment.

"A mistake?" she repeated. "'Mr. Sevening and I have broken it off.' Just why and how, I wonder? Has this something to do with our Rupert? Well!"

Presently a whole summer full of gay happenings seemed to have been crammed into three days.

Then came the morning of the hunt for the address of that place that raised foxes. Rupert wanted to give Frankie a scarf.

That was how it began.

Mrs. Raymond Griggs had given the address to Evangeline. Now what had Evangeline done with it?

Evangeline, a little bored, could only remember that she had written down the address on a half sheet of note paper, and had slipped it away in some safe place.

Looking wonderful in a beach hat trimmed with poppies to match those on her beach pyjamas, drifted back from the garden into the cool of the house, to look for the slip.

Suddenly she remembered where she had put it. Beside one of the library books she saw her large, square, tooled-leather blotter that Mme. Griggs had brought her from Vienna.

Evangeline, quickly picking it up, looked into it and found, instead of the half sheet of note paper, a number

of sheets of typing paper, all scribbled over.

"When," she thought, "did I do this?"

Two minutes later she was deep in somebody else's love letter.

NOW stop before you utter a word of blame. We all know this is not what we call "done." Evangeline did not do it out of ignorance, nor yet out of curiosity. It is quite likely, that being a gentlewoman, she would not even have had much temptation to begin the thing, had she started away with the first page. She had picked up one of the other pages, which started with her own name.

"Evangeline Griggs says—"

What could she possibly do?

If you found your own letter case, and in it what looked like the manuscript of a short story beginning with your own name, would you instantly drop it? You would? (Personally I should not have had the presence of mind.) *"Evangeline Griggs said—"* set Evangeline Griggs reading till she had been through every syllable. Once she bit her lip—was she thinking that she herself had never written a real love letter, not even to the attractive and adoring fellow she had married? Having finished one page, she turned to the others. You would have died rather? (Personally I am too fond of life.) Evangeline read the other pages.

She then stood for a moment. It was her habit to stand perfectly still, as though frozen, while inside that black and perfectly coifed head thoughts raced.

Outside she heard the chatter and laughter of the others; she heard the voice of little Frankie Carter calling "Rupert! *Rupert!*"

One moment she stood, the lovely Lido-dressed woman; then she came to life, glided to the stair.

"Oh, Venus!" she called aloud.

Her mother's little maid flitted to her like a chocolate-colored elf.

"Venus, I want the Rolls to take me to the city in ten minutes."

"Yes, Miss Evangeline."

"In ten minutes I have to be dressed for town."

"Yes, Miss Evangeline."

In eleven minutes' time she was in the Rolls, having politely but firmly refused young Alden's plea to be allowed to drive her; she was being driven by Good, the chauffeur.

In record time they made the city, and the address, which she gave the man, the offices of Mr. Eric Holt.

She had not waited to telephone to find out if Eric had returned. It was always quicker to go anywhere than to ring the place up, she had decided. "If I can't get hold of that young man any other way, I'll have to ask the Bartlett-Smiths. I hope, though, that it will be Eric who tells me."

In the outer office the clerk told her, to her relief, that Mr. Eric had arrived at the office five minutes ago; he'd come on from the West with another gentleman.

At once she said: "Is it Mr. Sevening?"

NOW Robert Sevening, on his way down from Grand Central, had stopped at his club and found a letter. He picked it out from a sheaf of others; bills, invitations. It was the first time he had ever seen her neat but unformed writing, but he knew that this gray envelope was the promised note from Frankie.

Now! Perhaps this would explain why her ladyship had accepted invita-

tions to rush away and stay with other people at the seaside—all without a word of warning to the man to whom she was engaged?

Thrusting the other letters into his pocket, and standing there in his club's cool, roomy entrance, he read the note that began "Dear Robert," went on to tell him she wished the engagement to be off, and ended, "Sincerely yours, Frankie Carter."

He read it over again, to be quite sure that he had made no mistake; then he put it back into its envelope.

"Taxi, sir?" said the porter.

"No, thanks, I've got my car waiting."

He got into the car, gave the address of Holt's office, and took his seat by Eric.

"All in order, Robert? Get all your love letters and everything? Er—you haven't had any bad news, have you?"

"No, thanks," said Sevening, with his usual careless grin. "No bad news."

Eric, however, could not help thinking that his pal seemed a little white about the gills. During a block in traffic he turned to Eric and said, "By the way, about what I told you yesterday noon—"

"Yes? You mean about your engagement to Miss Carter?"

"It's off," said Sevening succinctly. "You won't mention it?"

"My dear fellow. No," said Eric. He turned a distressed look from his friend's composed profile to the simmering traffic about them. "This is quite definite, Bob?"

"Quite, oh, quite." There escaped from Robert a small and savage sound that might have been a laugh. "Discarded and supplanted, with the utmost promptitude and dispatch."

For he thought that he had now grasped the situation.

The girl had given him his *congé* the moment she made sure of something better—Alden.

"Sorry," Eric was saying quietly.

"Oh, it's all right, thanks."

He imagined that he'd have to send a line to her? Just to acknowledge her note. He decided to send it then and there. Get it over. Shove it out of his life. Forget it before he so much as returned home to his mother. His mother, who did not know there was a person in the world called Frankie Carter, was just the society he needed.

"Mind if I come up into your office and write a note, Eric?"

"Do."

They had not been five minutes in the office when a lady was announced—Mrs. Evangeline Griggs.

Eric's delight showed on every line of his fastidious face, as beautiful Evangeline, to-day gowned in silvery chiffon as filmy as the fins of a Japanese fish, flitted into the office.

"How do you do, Eric? But I haven't come to consult you to-day; I came to ask you for the address of your friend," said Evangeline Griggs, after she had greeted both men with the smile of a reigning princess. "Yes, you, Mr. Sevening."

Sharply Robert asked: "Is this about—? Miss Carter's been ill—is she all right? She was your guest—?"

"She still is; she's marvelously well now," Evangeline said, secretly delighted to observe signs of emotion in this young man, put down by her as cold and conceited before.

"Eric, is there anywhere where I can talk to Mr. Sevening quietly?"

"Of course. You won't be disturbed in my private office."

Into that arid little place, all deed boxes, the smell of dust, piles of papers, and window bars, Eric showed his best friend and his idol, saw that they had chairs, and shut the door upon them.

"Mr. Sevening! I don't know whether I'm making a mistake in what I have to say to you—"

Sevening thought: "As she's a friend of those other people, she probably feels herself called upon to explain to me Rupert Alden?"

He said: "Mrs. Griggs, if you think it is necessary—"

"I do. I do. I know perfectly well what many people think about interfering in the lives of other people. For all that I'm going to interfere this once," said Evangeline Griggs, lifting her head high, so that her hat made a transparent silver halo for her face and shoulders. Sevening thought: "Yes! you're an exquisite looking busybody, but you leave me cold." The exquisite busybody meanwhile thinking: "Handsome eyes he's got, deep-set and watchful, and purply-gray as a lake on a summer night. I'd look plumb into them forever without my heart quickening a beat. How different from that unfortunate child!"

"Mr. Sevening! I," she announced, "have a letter here that neither of us was ever meant to see."

"Oh. Then that rather settles it, doesn't it?"

"It certainly does not. I have to tell you that personally I have read every word; and this is how it happened—" So quickly that he had some difficulty in following her low-pitched fluent, southern voice, Evangeline went on to explain about the two presents of letter cases which her mother had bought in Vienna, identical in shape and size and color, one of which she had given to her daughter, the other to the little girl friend; how she, Evangeline, had thought there was only the one, had searched through it, and had found—this.

She took from her black diamond-snapped bag the folded, scribbled-over sheets; she held them out.

"Written to you, Mr. Sevening—*and not for you to see!* Written by a girl who thought you'd never set eyes on it, but who put all she meant into it, and just couldn't bear to destroy it yet, though it was only for her own eyes. Shall I tear it up?" She raised the sheets in her hands. There was a brief pause; then Robert said, in a low voice:

"I should like to read it, with your permission."

At once she gave it to him, thinking: "If he hadn't read it, if he isn't going to act on it, he's more of a fish-blooded fool even than I thought him."

But already the eyes she'd noticed as being handsome, deep-set and watchful had been caught by a sentence.

"For I knew you were less well-off than I am, yet I am crazy about you."

"'Am'?" He thought in a flash. "*'Am'?* What's the date of this thing?"

There was no date; there was no beginning. There were only ungrammatical incoherent sentences, which as he read them seemed to rush audibly out at him, in the very accents of little Frankie's young, unsettled, touching voice.

DEAREST:

I'm writing this letter because, if I don't say what I mean just once I'll go mad. You'll never see this. I'll have to write to you another letter, which you will see.

Yesterday I had a long talk with my mother about you. I told her what I'd felt, I told her exactly what happened, and what I said to you in that firefly

wood, and she told me what a frightful, frightful mistake. And that my engagement was. I do see that. But I don't think telling you I wanted to marry you was really so frightful. Evangeline Griggs said, at that party, that primitive women chose the hunters they wanted, and that *they* weren't any less natural, and so I suppose I must hark back to that tribe! It doesn't seem to go down so well, now.

I think now that, though you liked me, you could never have loved me. In fact, I know now that you could never have loved me. If I had not said to you exactly what I did say I should never have known. I'd have let myself be very unhappy, I'd have gone on wondering and wondering why you said nothing that week in Vienna. Now that I know for certain it is because you did not want to, all this is so simple. But, though at first I was horrified over what I'd done, I'm not now. It can't be all *wasted*, even if one has to suffer frightfully, because now I know what things are *about!* I could never have known that before I met you. I find you so wonderful. Perhaps some people would say you weren't. I suppose they'd even think: "Well, here's a man who can't give the girl anything more than she's got. She's *got* money!" You know these people who say that *"A woman used to worship a man for his strength; now she respects him for his money."* But all this is boloney. It goes for nothing, for I knew you were less well off than I am, yet I am crazy about you.

I am to go away with very nice, kind people. Mother thinks it will help me to get over this. I believe she thinks there will soon be somebody else. But this is how I feel—

Imagine a twist of morning glory made to climb up some straight plant to which it has clung. The morning glory feels completely happy and *right*, winds its tendrils firmly round the stem, grows, spreads, blossoms. That's like a woman! I used not to think so, but now I know that's her natural way of growing. She *must* hold on to something more forceful; it *has* to be different. That was you to me, when I knew you, and when I thought that I was going to have you always near me. Imagine that stem suddenly taken away! Can't you see that twist of morning glory blown down; down to the ground? Tendrils broken. Leaves battered and muddy. Trumpet blossoms all spoiled. Presently, perhaps, it will find something to start growing up again.

It won't be the same, though. It can't. It will be poorer, crooked, a little spoiled—not the straight, happy, proud growth it started with.

That's "getting over things," and "finding somebody else"—after one has once *really* cared.

I care for you so much that it seems to have taken up every tendril of my nature. It made me stronger and straighter, and taller—being attached to you. All of me seemed to be blossoming out into glorious new flowers. Just like the name—*morning glory!* There seemed, too, to be lots more buds.

I think I could have been a wonderful girl, if just one thing had happened—*if you had thought so.*

Perhaps this thing has been at the back of a lot of these girls *considered* "wonderful," or for the matter of that, at the back of some of the men. One doesn't know. But you weren't dependent on that kind of thing; you were real.

It is hard that men don't like girls to be sincere. Girls would like to be it, more than they're allowed. I have liked telling you all these things, even though it's only been in my heart.

This will have to be all.

Good-by, Striped Scarf! That is my little secret name for you, just as you had one for me, though you never called me by it again. Do you know, I think that one time, when you called me that, and looked at me, an almost-kiss, was worth going through all this about.

Now I'll have to write to you that everything is off because my feelings have changed. Only in this letter for once in my life, I will put that I am all yours, your own,

SUNSHINE GIRL.

After Robert Sevening had read to the end, had put the sheets together, and tucked them carefully into his breast pocket, Evangeline had begun to wonder if he was ever going to speak again?

When he did, it was to the point.

"Mrs. Griggs. Do you think your people would mind very much if I drove straight back with you now?"

CHAPTER XVII

THE OFFER OF MARRIAGE

EVEN then it seemed one maddening holdup after another before Sevening could get to the girl, the unique girl, the girl who thought he had less money than she, and who yet was crazy about him—the girl he was not now going to let go.

He had to pack; Eric (who was invited, too) had to pack; they all had to eat. But at last they were off.

At every minute of delay and every mile between them he now fumed. Yet what are miles, roads? Concrete things. Far more insurmountable are the barriers of misunderstanding. These barriers were now down, as far as Robert Sevening was concerned. Little Frankie's unmailed letter had done it, the touching scribble that she had thought he would never see. And the most powerful sentence in all the letter was: "For I knew you had less money than I, yet I am crazy about you." He thanked Heaven that a foolish fad had kept him from letting Frankie know about "Cytherea's" and the rest. He could be quite certain, now, that he had found the real thing. He had wanted it as much as he had wanted success—wanted it to crown his success. Those who thought in the terms of a man's strength being his money would pass Robert Sevening as a most eligible husband. This slip of a girl, who thought his income was less than her own, thought *him* wonderful. The infernal car would not get on.

Lord, the infernal car had pulled up. He echoed Evangeline's inquiry to the chauffeur.

"What's the matter?"

"An accident ahead, madam."

This was just before the long hill at the end of their long ride. Behind a procession of other cars, the Rolls was held up.

They craned their necks.

"Anybody hurt?"

"Apparently not."

Presently a policeman, notebook in hand, strolled up to add their names and addresses to those of other people as witnesses to a collision ("Which," as Evangeline remarked, "we never witnessed"). At long last the crashed car ahead was towed away, and the procession moved off.

"Wasting hours!" fumed Sevening.

One would imagine that this young man had himself never wasted a minute. He fumed; a new and sudden terror took him. Supposing he got there and found that Frankie, on the rebound, had engaged herself to this Alden guy? Even suppose she had written away all she felt about him, Sevening, in that desperate letter? Such a thing has been known to happen. Supposing Frankie no longer felt that way?

The Rolls swept through a gateway and zigzagged up the hillside to the terrace in front of the Alden's summer home.

Sevening's eyes looked eagerly ahead. How would he find Frankie?

It was between tea and cocktail time. The household had come back off the beach; gardens and verandas

hummed with voices and laughter. A gramophone was playing a fox trot, and two of the young people, Wilfred Alden and a girl in pink off a yacht, were dancing on the one clear space of the veranda.

Rupert looked up from rolling the lower lawn.

"Ha, here's Evangeline back," he said. "Brought folks with her."

He moved up to the car. There had just got out Evangeline and two men. Rupert knew one of them.

In that first instant he seemed to know everything else as well.

Of course.

This tall fellow, who had called to see Frankie at her home, had now come to look for her down here. He was looking about at the moment, wondering: "Where's Frankie?" By this time Rupert could imagine himself trailing across Europe, Asia, Africa, and the States, to see Frankie Carter.

The two men exchanged a glance like that of two fencers before they cross foils.

Evangeline was saying: "Well, come along, Eric. You haven't even met mother. I'll introduce you to the rest presently. Rupert, find drinks and things."

Rupert Alden was still looking at the newcomer. Then he gave a very pleasant smile. He was a sportsman, and something told him that this game was up.

"Glad to see you, Sevening," he said. "We have a friend of yours here already: Miss Carter." Deeply attracted to Frankie as he was, the young man had grown to feel that for her he was the second-best. Was this fellow first best? In his generous heart he could find himself able to hope so, for the girl's sake. "Mayn't I take you to her?"

"Extraordinarily kind of you," said Robert, who, having sent another searching glance around, found no sign of the girl he'd come to see.

"She was resting, round here in this corner we call the Sun trap," said Rupert.

He led the way to the west of the house.

In "the Sun trap," a hammock of scarlet silk was slung between two veranda pillars; in the hammock swung Frankie, beside her the fair-haired second youngest Griggs baby, Orchid.

"More," she was saying. "More, Frankie!"

She sat there hatless in the sun, wearing her Viennese frock of frilly yellow muslin, with creamy silk stockings and little yellow plaited sandals. Over her frock she had slipped on a coat of buttercup-yellow satin, embroidered in gold. None of the golds in this picture were as bright as Frankie's own small gilt head, out of which the sun struck strongest dazzlement.

"More!" demanded the baby; Frankie laughed and swung, and rays darted from her hair and her coat and her little feet.

It was only appropriate that Sevening, coming up to this patch of radiance, and letting his shadow fall across it like an arm, should greet her as he had greeted her once in his life before.

"Hello, Sunshine Girl."

Frankie did not answer.

"*More!*" protested the Griggs ex-baby. "Swing!"

Rupert, without looking at the girl, picked the baby up out of the hammock.

"Come on, Orchid," said he. "Uncle Rupert will swing you some place else."

He lifted the child to his shoulder and walked off, leaving those two.

ROBERT said: "How are you?" Frankie was dumb and motionless.

Was it possible that she saw him here before her? Could it be she had heard him say that name?

He took her hand. He kissed it, not as a caress, only as a reminder of the hand-kiss they had often seen in Vienna, a gesture of greeting or farewell.

"Are you better? You look fine. May I sit down?" He moved a cushion, and sat in the hammock beside her. "I wasn't allowed to see how you looked last time I came to your house."

"You came to our house?"

"Naturally. I came as soon as I heard you were ill to inquire."

For her the sun seemed to go out again. "Naturally." "To inquire." He had been doing his duty.

The worst was not yet over? Would she, oh, would she have to tell him herself that she wanted the engagement off? She said: "You didn't get my letter?" She was hardly prepared to see the delight on Sevening's face. It sparkled in his eyes, showed all his magnificent teeth, white against the warmer color in his face.

"My letter," the little thing said. He had one sheet of note paper from her in one pocket; in the other pocket other sheets.

"Did you write to me, Frankie?"

Only with an effort could she make herself say: "You haven't been to your club yet? I wrote there."

"You wrote to my club?" said Robert Sevening, looking at her as though he had never seen her before. "What's in the letter, Frankie?"

She cleared her throat; she hardened her voice. "It was to break off our engagement," she said.

"Why?" asked Sevening, and his tone was only curious. "Why write such a silly thing, Sunshine?"

The gardens appeared to shift and change before Frankie's eyes, even as the plane had tilted, even as her room at home had wavered when she was ill.

"Why?"

With an immense effort the little thing pulled herself together, so that her voice was firm.

"Everybody makes mistakes."

"They do, they do, indeed," agreed Robert Sevening gayly. "Sometimes fellows think they aren't going to want to get married for another ten years. I was like that myself; and now look at me!"

This was completely impossible, as far as Frankie was concerned.

"Why did you suggest," asked Sevening, "that you didn't want to marry me? Was it because of—"

"Er—Mr. Sevening. Oh, excuse me, sir."

At the sound of this alien male voice Frankie and Sevening both started so violently that they almost fell out of the hammock. Frankie, looking up in dismay, encountered a face which for a moment she thought she knew, but not where she'd seen it; another flash and she did know where. Pennsylvania Station. It was the policeman who had arrested him that morning!

TO add to the nightmare, he was not now *dressed* like a policeman! He had black leggings, a khaki uniform, and a peaked cap.

He now announced: "Sorry to have to trouble you, sir, but it's about that accident just now. This was the address the constable gave me, gentle-

man in a Rolls car—well, if it isn't Mr. Sevening!"

"Very glad to see you, Charles," said Sevening, shaking hands heartily. "How are you? Fine and large? Splendid. Come along, I'll take you to the people."

Frankie, still awhirl with confusion, hope, and despair, would have stayed behind in the "Sun trap." Striped Scarf slipped his hand into her arm. She felt the magnetism of it through the warm golden satin of the happi-coat. What could she do? Nothing but follow the men round to the other side of the house. Here she would have slipped away to her room to change for dinner, tidy her hair, powder her nose, anything, anything! rather than stay here in this crowd. She was held (lightly but not to escape!) by this man to whom she had been engaged, but who had not yet, it seemed, grasped the situation. Or had he? Or had she?

Here they stood, in the middle of the two massed families, with visitors and adherents. Instantly they were involved in that post accident discussion which takes so much longer than any accident. All Frankie took in was a buzz.

Finally it was over; they stopped talking. Came the soft thunder of the gong, and the trooping of the mixed party to the dining veranda.

Frankie was torn by uncertainty. Why had he come? Out of pity? Why, he did not even know how badly Frankie stood in need of pity. Under that mask of brightness, nothing seemed worth while any more. Nothing! Not having money of her own, and being able to help them at home, and to give a hand to Win and Ronald with their furnishing. Not even this lovely time down here! Not the sense of being utterly adored by Rupert Alden. Into the midst of the most miserable time of her life, the cause of that misery had suddenly reappeared.

Why?

No getting an answer yet.

TALK at table was about something else which had been a mystery to Frankie.

"Who was the fellow? Seemed to know Mr. Sevening."

"Well? I should think he did. know me? Rather. He was my buddy in the war. Good man, Charles—poor fellow—"

"Why 'poor fellow'?"

"Frightful bad luck he had. Buried twice, blown up once, shell shocked. Very bad relapse of shell shock he got; quite lately," said Sevening. He looked at Frankie, who had, of course, been placed beside him, and smiled into her eyes as if this were a joke she understood. She hardly dared to hope she understood the smile. "Charles was back at his old work in the police force. Well, this ghastly battiness came on him; he got the idea of arresting all sorts of odd people. Felt he had to. People he knew and liked. Me, for instance."

"What? He arrested you?"

"He did. Met me at the station, where I came on the train I always travel by"—here Sevening shot another glance at Frankie—"and wanted to walk me off, there and then, to the nearest police station. I went with him to see that he was all right. He had a breakdown after that."

Exclamations broke out—"Well, but didn't they put him away in some asylum?"

"No. Er—I don't much approve of lunatic asylums. It seems a pity to

waste a good maniac, when one might let him out to murder people who would be better out of the way!"

At long last dinner was over.

The party broke up. The long warm spring evening slipped away, into the arms of the purple night.

Mme. Griggs sat in the drawing-room with her old friend, Grandfather Alden; Evangeline sat on the veranda with Eric. Young Rupert, for whom they were all sorry, sat in the nursery and told stories to the children.

"I'm glad," thought he, "that *somebody* wants me."

A GOOD way up the hill from the house, Frankie Carter was walking at the side of her "young gentleman."

He had walked her off from the party, walked her away.

He now pointed out to sea, where, against the purple gloom the town lights flashed.

"Like those fireflies," remarked Sevening. "Do you remember them?"

"*No!* Please don't! Ever!"

"I'll never forget them. I don't intend to try."

"You must!" she cried out. "Promise! You must!"

"Why, Frankie? Why, my Sunshine Girl?"

She answered tremulously and wildly. Yet the tremulousness did not come from the depth of her heart. Deep down, she already knew that something had happened to bring about this incredible thing. She could not guess how it had happened; she knew only that somehow already it was all right.

Knowing, she could scarcely believe. She faltered: "You *must* promise that you'll forget everything I said in that wood that night! Because men—men always like a girl *less* who has given away what she feels! Because—"

Through the darkness he looked toward her. He could not see her face. He could hardly see the outline of her shapely little body over which the pretty frock had gleamed, gold over ivory. He could, however, still see those touching words she had written on a page she had not meant for him to see. He determined that she should not know he had seen them—not yet, not for a long time yet. So much else to be said between them first!

She could not see his face. Only she realized now that she need no longer feel either misery or shame. Was it too good to be true? She uttered aloud words from which the wisdom seemed to have gone, leaving them poor.

"Because men have to be 'kept guessing.' The man has to imagine he's the hunter. She must be reluctant. Fatal, fatal mistake for the girl to let him know first that she cares—"

He was still looking through the soft darkness toward her. She felt as though through that darkness some force had moved; some ally stood beside her. How could she believe it? "Isn't it true that the girl *has* to pretend? Isn't it true that men *like* the girl to be insincere?"

"Good Lord," broke from him, "how should I know or care a damn what men like in girls?" It broke savagely from him. "It's you *I* like and want! little Pretender as you are! Men like a girl to be insincere, do they? If they do, your last note to me should have been a crashing success. Did you think it rang true? Your note about wanting our engagement off? Ah, bah—there's been enough of this—"

He took the one step that divided

them. He seized her in his arms. It was the first time he had ever kissed her. Even if it had not been on the mouth, it must still have left her breathless. She could feel his heart beat hard. She began to say something about, "not pity—" "You do really like me—"

He would not let her.

Then he went on triumphantly: "If you don't know now, you'll never know for certain. There's where I have the pull over you. I shall always know you liked *me,* personally, apart from my making all this money—"

"What do you mean? I don't understand."

He knew, and thanked Heaven for it. He began to explain to her.

Presently Frankie asked: "Why did you never tell me?" She drew away a little. "Why did you let me go right on, make that mistake of telling you first!"

"Does this look like a mistake? *Feel* like a mistake?" Again he caught her close; while below them the harbor lights twinkled, twinkled just like those fireflies twinkling in that far-distant Austrian pine wood. "Frankie! I didn't tell you first! No! But neither did you 'tell me first'! Something that didn't ask our leave just threw us at each other's heads from the moment I caught sight of you; that was the start!"

She thought: "I believe that's *true.*" She felt at her side that something, that force, that ally which some people call the life force, some, nature. "*What woman wills,*" this force wills; was that it? She thought: "As long as *he* believes it."

Ardent, he was muttering pet names on her soft warm mouth from which all trace of scented make-believe had been kissed away. "Darling. Little sweet *Silly.* My Sweetheart. My own Girl. Sunshine! Now say my name!"

Against his shoulder she put back her head. In utter content she sighed: "Striped Scarf!"

"Ah, that's your name for me, is it?" He laughed as though he had never, in her handwriting, read it. Not likely that he was going to tell her anything about that until they were married—a long time married.

Impetuously it broke from him: "Look here. *When?* Seriously. The main question, darling. How soon? How *soon* are you going to marry me?"

She did not answer in words. She merely nestled her head closer against his shoulder.

Then Sevening remembered something else. "Look here," he said suddenly. "Your mother told me I was going to hear some news about you. I thought—I thought she meant there was some one else. Some *news!*"

Frankie laughed, low and happily. "Well, wasn't she right?" she asked. "*You* have made *me* an offer of marriage. Isn't that news?"

The End

These two hated each other for her sake

His Great Love

By C. M. WARE

JUNE paused on the stair landing and looked down on the brilliant scene in the room below. As her eyes roved over the select little assemblage and came to rest on the dark, handsome face of Hugh Trayner, a little frown puckered her creamy brow. Hugh was wealthy, handsome, came of good family and was considered a very desirable catch by most of the girls in their set, and June herself might have considered him more seriously had it not been for Knox Lassiter. Hugh had been very persistent in his attentions of late, and she was beginning to be a little bored by him. Had it only been Knox instead of Hugh who was making love so ardently, her cup of happiness would have been full. She knew in her heart that Knox adored her, though he had never spoken a word of love. If only he would.

Suddenly she saw him standing near the doorway, glancing around keenly. She knew that his eyes were searching for her, and as her gaze came to rest on his handsome, manly face and figure, her lovely eyes grew luminous with love and a tender little smile curved her rose-petal lips.

Knox looked up, saw her, and came eagerly to the foot of the stairs. June's heart was fluttering wildly as she tripped sedately down to him.

"Couldn't we slip out a moment be-

fore the dancing begins?" he asked shyly.

The girl felt a delightful sensation suffusing her. He had never asked to be alone with her before, and she divined what was coming. Her heart leaped rapturously as they made their way to a rose arbor in a secluded corner of the garden.

"June, I wish I could express my feelings to-night—about you, I mean," he said as they seated themselves on a rustic bench.

"Silly boy!" She laughed, though her heart was pounding. "You a college graduate and can't use your grammar!"

"Plain English isn't sufficient. It would take poetry. June, you're so—wonderfully"—he was groping for the right word—"exalted. There's something spirituelle about you. You seem more kin to the angels than to us poor mortals." His voice was moved.

"That's probably because you don't know me very well," she answered, smiling.

With a sudden swift gesture, Knox's arms swept out and drew her close. "Darling, give me the right to know you better. Be my wife! June, I love you so—" He bent his head for a kiss, but suddenly drew back and released her. "Forgive me, June," he exclaimed contritely. "I didn't mean to be so abrupt."

But June would not let him go. She flung herself into his arms again and put her own around his neck. "Kiss me, dear," she commanded softly. "Can't you see that I love you, too?"

With a little inarticulate cry of joy, he pressed her slight form to his breast and their lips met in a long, clinging kiss. An ecstatic silence fell over them. The world had ceased to exist.

After a little, June lifted her starry eyes reproachfully. But she did not draw away.

"Why haven't you told me sooner, dear boy? I've seen the love light in your eyes so long. We've wasted precious hours."

"I couldn't, June. Yes, I've loved you, you precious darling, for a long, long time, but how could I, a poor bank teller with nothing but my salary, have the effrontery to ask the daughter of the richest man in town to share my poverty? But at last a little luck has come my way. I've just put through a little business deal which netted me a tidy sum, not much, but enough to make the start with."

"You absurd darling!" June cried. "So you think I'm a vain, useless, mercenary butterfly!"

He pressed her close with tender arms. "Not that, dear heart, but you know you have been raised in luxury. You've had your every whim gratified. I couldn't bear to have you marry me and then regret it because I couldn't give you the things you've always had."

She snuggled closer and raised her lips for his kiss. "I could never do that, Knox dear. I'd rather share your dear companionship in a little hovel than live in splendor with a lonely heart."

"You precious sweetheart! Do you really love me like that?" he asked wonderingly.

"Just try me and see," she invited, with a daresome little toss of her adorable head. "Just to prove it, we'll put your old money in the bank and let it stay there. We'll find us a darling, comfy little cottage out in the edge of the country. You can drive in to your work, while I stay home like a good little wife and cook, sweep, darn your

socks and tend the flowers and chickens."

KNOX sighed blissfully. The picture was almost too wonderful to become true. A little wave of cold fear rushed over him. Such a paradise could never be his. He strained her slim body to him convulsively.

"That would be heavenly," he murmured. "But it can't ever be. Nothing so heavenly as that can happen. I'll wake up presently and find that this is just another dream. It can't last."

"It can last! It must last! Oh, I couldn't bear it if something should happen now," June cried brokenly. "Tell me, Knox, that nothing in heaven or on earth can keep us apart now."

For answer he clasped her ardently and kissed her again and again. "They say the course of true love never runs smooth," Knox said, a note of uncertainty in his voice, "but surely nothing can happen to a love as strong and fine as ours."

"Nothing, Knox! I'll be true, dear, till death parts us," June declared fervently.

"So will I, darling. Till death and after—till the stars shall fall and the sun and moon shall rise no more," he affirmed with solemn earnestness.

They embraced again. Their lips met and clung in a long, lingering kiss. For a space they remained thus, enraptured, glorified, motionless, in a stillness more ecstatic than any action; voiceless, in a silence more thrillingly eloquent than any speech. Then, with a blissful little sigh, June gently disengaged herself.

"We really must go in, dear. They'll be out with a searching party presently."

With difficulty the young man shook himself back to earth and tenderly helped her to rise.

"What do you think your father will say about this?" he asked, a thread of uneasiness in his voice.

June looked up at him mischievously, adorably. "He's never denied me any of the little things of life. Do you think I'll allow him to deny me this, the only thing in the world that I couldn't live without?"

They found Mr. Moore on a deserted end of the porch, enjoying a solitary cigar. Knox vaguely sensed that the banker was not in his usual jovial mood and wondered if the moment were propitious, but June boldly bearded the lion in his den. She threw her arms around her father's neck and caressed him fondly.

"Daddy, I've just got engaged to the dearest and nicest young man in the world and we thought we'd drop around and receive your blessing. We're going to be married some time."

"Very soon, I hope," said Mr. Moore teasingly. "I've carried the burden of your support about as long as I can. I'll be more than glad to shift the expenses to younger and stronger shoulders."

June twitched his ear. "Sssh, you'll have Mr. Lassiter thinking I'm expensive to support," she chided.

Her father ignored her raillery and looked at Lassiter seriously.

"I have nothing against you, Lassiter," he said frankly. "I hate to see my girl go, but if go she will, I had as soon see her go to you as any one else."

"Thank you, sir."

"I'm sorry to leave you, daddy, but I really mustn't let this opportunity slip." June flashed Knox a glance that made him ache to hug her. "I might never have another. Would you want me to be an old maid?"

Mr. Moore chuckled. "Go worry your mother," he exclaimed in mock despair. "Take her away, Lassiter. Can't you see that she's annoying me?"

June gave him another hug and rumpled his hair before she jumped up. "We'd better go see mumsie, I guess," she caroled.

As they moved off, Mr. Moore called after them, "Lassiter, I wish you'd come down a little early in the morning. There's a tangle that I can't make head or tail of."

Mrs. Moore was an even easier conquest than her husband had been. Knox had long been a favorite with her and she made no attempt to conceal her delight at her daughter's selection.

News of the engagement quickly leaked out and the popular young couple were congratulated on every side.

June, always lovely, was superbly so to-night. And there was a little tremulousness, a subdued quality, about her gayety, as though she stood on the threshold of a happiness too great to be fully comprehended, which enhanced her charm tenfold. There was not a young man present who did not envy Knox Lassiter for his good fortune.

Knox, too, was at his best, and more than one fair maiden felt her secret hopes perish in her bosom when she learned of his engagement to June Moore.

"Well, children," said Frank Lowery, as he stood on the lawn with the two of them, after the dance had broken up and the others had gone, "allow the old bachelor to offer his congratulations and then he, too, will fade away. Knox, you're sure lucky, clear through to the *n*th degree. You too, June! Since it couldn't be just a little bit different, I'm mighty glad it's the way it is." He looked at her with a little twisted smile. "There's only one other man I had rather had won, and I guess he wouldn't have stood any show if he'd been the only man. Oh, well, 'Of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these—it might have been.'" He had spoken in a light, half-bantering tone, but the happy pair were not deceived. Frank Lowery was hard hit and striving manfully to conceal it.

June threw her arm around his shoulder and laughed a little tremulous laugh.

"Shoo, Frank! You're just feeling away below par to-night. In a little while the right girl will come along."

For just an instant Frank lost his grip of himself. His mask was off and the two others caught a glimpse of his mortally wounded spirit in its agony.

"A man doesn't feel toward two women the way I've felt toward one," he broke out huskily, and turned and strode away. A moment later they heard his racer roaring up the street.

"Poor old fellow!" Knox murmured commiseratingly. "I'm sorry for him." He gathered June tenderly to him. "Darling, more and more I'm made to wonder why you chose me and culled such fellows as Frank. He's my equal in every way, and financially he's got dollars to my dimes. He or Hugh Trayner either could have given you more of the good things of life than I'll ever be able to."

"Because I love you, Knox," June replied simply, and nestled close in his arms. "He'll soon get over it."

"No," Knox contradicted her soberly, "he'll never get over it."

"Well, what about Hugh? Aren't you sorry for him too?"

Knox shook his head. "I don't think Hugh's as capable of loving as Frank

is. With Hugh it's more a physical attraction. If something should happen to mar or disfigure you his love more divine love, that will still be strong and true when our bodies are old and withered and shrunken and infirm."

She went to see him, plead with him, in his prison cell

wouldn't stand the test."

"And yours?" she queried softly.

Knox kissed her again.

"Darling, I love your thrilling, dazzling, intoxicating beauty, your lovely face and figure more than Hugh or any other man possibly could, and, besides, I love you with a purer love, a

With a little ecstatic murmur June snuggled to him until each could feel the tumultuous beating of the other's heart. Their lips met in a long, lingering kiss of perfect bliss.

AFTERWARD, when Knox had gone, June sat by the window of her darkened room, too riotously happy for slumber till far into the night. And when she finally slept, it

was to dream in blissful ecstasy of her lover.

She slept late the following morning and was finally aroused by a persistent shaking. She opened her eyes and stretched her graceful figure languidly. A maid stood by her bedside, and as June noted the expression on her face she struggled instantly to a sitting posture.

"What's wrong, Kathryn?" she asked breathlessly.

"Get up, Miss June," the girl moaned. "Your father is dead."

June stared at her dazedly. "I can't believe it!" she cried, as she sprang out of bed and began a hasty toilet. "Why, only last night—"

But downstairs she found that it was only too true. Mr. Moore had been found dead in his office at the bank. Heart trouble the doctors had pronounced it. His wife was prostrated and under the care of a physician. The house was rapidly filling with relatives and sympathetic friends and neighbors; Hugh Trayner dropped by to offer condolences, and later Frank Lowery came.

In her first grief June had forgotten Knox, but now she began to wonder why he had failed to come or phone.

"Have you seen Knox this morning?" she asked Frank Lowery, who was standing in sympathetic silence by her side.

He looked at her with pity in his face. "Haven't you heard, June?" he asked miserably.

The girl's face went chalk-white with some nameless presentiment.

"Good God, child! I can't tell you—not after what happened last night," Frank burst out and left her abruptly.

A neighbor who stood near thrust a copy of the little local newspaper into June's nerveless fingers. "You'll find all about it in there, June," she said.

June took the paper and flew to her room as fast as her trembling legs would carry her. On the front page, in glaring type, was an account of the death of Banker Moore. Death, the paper stated, was due to heart failure brought on by shock attendant upon the discovery of the fact that Knox Lassiter, a trusted cashier and his daughter's fiancé, had robbed the bank and skipped out with the proceeds.

"Knox, darling Knox! I don't believe it," June moaned faintly.

A terrible weakness assailed her, but she did not faint. She remembered that the preceding night Knox had mentioned a little business deal which had netted him a sum of money. A thread of doubt crept insidiously into her mind, but she stubbornly fought it down. Knox a thief! Knox the indirect cause of her father's death! It could not be! She would not let her faith waver. Summoning all her strength, she composed herself and went downstairs. Never did character and breeding show better than in that terrible hour.

With a face marblelike in its whiteness and immobility, she faced the trying hours of the next few days. None realized the terrible anguish she suffered nor the heartbreaking manner in which she grieved in the privacy of her room throughout the long, sleepless nights.

Hugh sought her out frequently and proved his heartfelt sympathy by countless little deeds and actions. In so far as he felt was permissible, he took the burden of the funeral arrangements from Mrs. Moore's shoulders, and by his thoughtfulness was helpful in innumerable other little ways. Mrs. Moore came to lean on

him very much, and June experienced a growing and deepening gratitude toward him. Frank Lowery also proved his worth, though in a less obtrusive and assuming manner.

Mrs. Moore rallied somewhat and was able to attend the funeral. A few days later she and June, with the maid Kathryn and the faithful old housekeeper, moved out of town to one of their country places. Here the widow and her lovely daughter strove valiantly to conquer their grief and pick up the broken threads of life. The mother gradually succeeded after a fashion, but the daughter failed dismally. Hers was a double sorrow, and though she had conquered the first paroxysm of grief, there remained a dull, unending ache which day by day sapped her strength and left her paler, thinner, more listless than before.

Every day Hugh Trayner drove out or sent a subtle reminder in the form of flowers or candy.

"You're getting scandalously thin, June," he told her one evening. "You're grieving yourself away. Buck up! Of course I know it's natural for you to mourn the loss of your father, but I'm beginning to believe your sorrow is more for that missing cashier. I don't like that, because he wasn't worthy of one regret."

A faint color flamed in June's pallid cheeks, and though she did not reply to his reproof, Hugh was almost instantly conscious of a coolness in her attitude toward him. He was quick to see that he had made a mistake, and throughout the remainder of the evening he exerted himself to regain his former standing.

The next afternoon Frank dropped in. He was a gifted conversationalist, and while he, June and Mrs. Moore sat on the vine-clad veranda he kept up a rapid fire of gay, light chatter which amused the ladies in spite of themselves. But later, in the kitchen, where he and June had gone to make ice cream, he became suddenly serious.

"June," he began hesitantly as they assembled the various ingredients, "I'd like to mention a delicate subject if you wouldn't take offense."

She looked at him quickly, misunderstanding.

"Don't, Frank," she pleaded in distress.

"Get me straight, June," he persisted gently. "I'm speaking as a friend to a friend about a friend—Knox Lassiter."

A delicate pink stole into the girl's alabaster cheeks.

"What about Knox?" she faltered.

"Well, the law hasn't been able to locate him, and I've hunted high and low on my own hook and failed. I just thought maybe—possibly—you knew his whereabouts. I'm your friend, June, and I'm his friend," Frank assured her earnestly.

"I know that, Frank, and I'd tell you if I could, but I haven't seen nor heard from him since—that night."

"What about our friend Hugh?" Frank asked after a short pause.

"Hugh has stood by us like a brick. I'm deeply grateful to him," she declared loyally.

"No more?" he queried.

"No more," was the steady reply. "No man can ever take the place Knox filled. If the time comes when Hugh isn't satisfied to be just a friend, then we'll be at the parting of the ways, because he can never be more. I believe that Knox is innocent of any crime, and until he's brought back and proved guilty I'm ready and waiting to hear his explanation."

"Atta girl," Frank applauded warm-

ly. "I'm with you. I've got a private detective on the case, but so far we're up against a blank wall. However, I'm certain that Knox is no embezzler. Our first job is to locate him. He's a mighty poor liar, and once we find him we'll pick the straight of this business out of him in no time."

"And then if he's unworthy," June continued, as if Frank had not spoken, "I'll tear his image from my heart if I can. But Hugh can't take his place—ever." She hesitated and looked at Frank steadily. "Another would come before him," she added gently.

For a fleeting instant Frank's eyes betrayed his deep emotion. Then he said huskily: "It's you and Knox, June. I'm not in it."

FRANK'S visit buoyed June up considerably, but as eventful day after eventful day went by her drooping spirits sank lower and lower; finally her last faint hopes vanished, leaving her pale, thin, restless and morbid. She was now but a mere shadow of her former gay and charming self.

One evening the telephone rang and June languidly went to answer it. In a moment she came out, excitedly.

"Knox has surrendered to the police. He's in jail in Moorefield, and I'm going to see him," she gasped out.

Before Mrs. Moore could remonstrate, the girl had flung herself into her little roadster and was speeding toward town.

On the courthouse steps she encountered Frank, and with him was a quiet, keen-eyed, capable-looking man, whom Frank introduced as Mr. Murray.

The jailer conducted her along the corridor, ushered her into Knox's cell and left them alone. Just inside the door June paused and anxiously regarded the pale, haggard-faced man who had risen from his cot and stood facing her. For a space both were silent, motionless. Then the girl went toward him hesitantly.

"You shouldn't have come here, June," Knox reproved her sadly.

"Frank said you wanted to see me," she faltered.

"Yes, but I didn't send for you." He dropped back on his cot and covered his face with his hands. "I've longed to see you every minute," he groaned. "But the past is past. I knew it was too good to last. This must be our earthly good-by, June."

June's mind was in a turmoil, but above the confusion one thought stood out clearly.

"Knox, do you still—feel about me—as you did that last night we were together?" To her that was the all-important thing. "If you don't, then I'll go," she added brokenly.

Knox sprang up in agitation. "I do, June! Before God, I do! But I love you a thousand times too well to let your proud name be associated with that of a common thief," he declared vehemently.

By this time the girl was crying softly. "What made you do it, Knox? We would have been so happy—"

"I didn't, June. I swear it," was the fervent answer. "I'm guiltless of any crime, but I can never prove my innocence. I'll have to serve my sentence." He extended his hands to her. "Will you kiss me once, June, before we part?"

She came into his outstretched arms and looked at him with shining eyes. "I believe in you," she said. "And I'll kiss you, dearest, not once, but a thousand times."

He gathered her to him convulsively and as their lips met the grim prison walls faded into the background, dim and remote.

At last he released her gently. "Good-by," he said.

June was looking at him, the light of resolution shining in her radiant, love-lit eyes.

"Silly boy, it's not good-by. I'm just going after the license and a minister. We'll be married now and I'll be waiting for you when you get your freedom."

Knox gazed at her incredulously. "You'd really do that, June?" he asked. "Darling, I believe you do really love me."

In the sheriff's office in the courthouse sat Frank Lowery, a half dozen police officials and a couple of reporters. Detective Murray was speaking tersely.

"A clever bit of work," the sheriff commented grudgingly when Murray had finished. "In a nutshell you've told us that Hugh Trayner stole the bank's funds; that President Moore suspected him, called him into his office and during the stormy interview died of heart failure. Then Trayner, to cover his tracks, writes a note, imitating Mr. Moore's handwriting, in which the banker admits his unwise use of the bank's money. Lassiter comes in, sees the old man dead, reads the note and jumps to the conclusion which Trayner intended that folks should—that the president had defrauded the bank, juggled his books and died of worry. Lassiter, to shield the old man's name and his wife and daughter, takes the note and skips out, thus taking the blame for the whole business."

"You've got it down pat," observed Murray quietly. "And in case you want more proof, here's Trayner's confession." He took a folded paper from his pocket and handed it to the sheriff. "In return for it, I gave him a twenty-four hour start of the law. However my men caught him in Cincinnati."

AN hour later a man and a girl in a little roadster were driving slowly along a country road.

"And just to think," said Knox, exultation in his voice, "that your love never wavered—that you would have married me in prison." His arm encircled her waist and his lips caressed her auburn hair. "Dear little girl, your love has been tried and found true."

Her lips brushed his cheek shyly. "And so has yours, darling. You would have gone through life branded as a thief to shield my father's name from dishonor. Could any love do more than that?"

"Little sweetheart," he said in a tone of quiet earnestness that thrilled her heart, "I hope our troubles are over—that henceforward no cloud will shadow the sunshine of our happiness, but if trials must come, no sacrifice will be too great for me to make if I am strengthened by your dear love and trust. To be deprived of you—that is the only thing I couldn't bear."

He drew her lithe body to him and tilted her sweet face upward. A quiver of pure ecstasy raced through her. She raised her lips for his caress, and in the depths of his eloquent gray eyes she caught the steady gleam of a deathless devotion.

"Do you know, dearest," June murmured, after a blissful silence, "now that our suffering is over, I'm almost glad we had to go through it. It has proved beyond a doubt that our love is undying."

"If I was marrying my ideal man I'd save the room for—oh, just in case"

Red Gingham Hearts

By DAISY DEAN

"WELL, what's wrong with a black and white kitchen with black chiffon curtains to match?" demanded Elaine.

Flo blushed. Blushing, however, comes easy to fair skinned, red-haired girls, as does holding one's own ideas, even against the tide of Elaine's beauty and indignation.

"You see, Elaine, this is a kitchen, not a stage set. You're going to live here—wash socks here—eat your meals here. Somehow I can't imagine frying pork chops under a window done in black chiffon!"

"Frying pork chops! Washing socks!" A horrified expression clouded Elaine's face. "We—we'll have a maid, of course."

Flo counted two and two in her fluffy red head, but did not remind Elaine that a maid represented an impractical luxury on Dirk's forty per week. Instead she said:

"Even so, Elaine, there's something uncanny about having black chiffon curtains in a kitchen. We'll put it up to Dirk."

Elaine and Flo turned to the kitchen radiator, where Dirk was sprawled, chiefly because he was the sort of young man who had to sprawl some place, if only on an uncomfortable bumpy gray radiator.

There was a frown on his face, but that wasn't anything to get bothered about. Dirk's face always wore some sort of definite expression. He, too, was red-headed, belonging to the category of blond red-heads, while Flo was decidedly a brunette red-head.

This deviation made no difference in their respective tempers, and they were generally armored against each other. Which was reason enough for Elaine to gasp aloud as Flo meekly asked Dirk's opinion.

Dirk's answer was all the more startling. Elaine most certainly expected him to champion her black chiffon side, if for no other reason than to disagree with Flo. Instead, retaining the frowning expression, he said:

"For once in your life you're right, Flo. I kind of hoped Elaine would want—well—say red gingham curtains."

"Red gingham curtains!" scoffed Elaine, her ash blond head tilting defiantly. "I should say not! I couldn't bear them."

What she really couldn't bear was that, for the first time since she had introduced red-headed Dirk to Flo of the same shade of tresses, they had taken sides against her and were agreeing with each other.

"Your suggestion is perfect, old boy!" laughed a too-radiant Flo. "Red checkered curtains, with linoleum and shelf paper to match and red geraniums on the window sills, and Elaine"—she paused for emphasis—"Elaine in a red checkered gingham house apron with fluffy ruffles!"

"What a picture for a tired, hungry business man to come home to," laughed Dirk, unsprawling himself from the radiator and surveying the four windows which lined the kitchen with sudden genuine interest. "How much of that stuff do you s'pose it would take? It's cheap, isn't it?"

"Say, whose house is this going to be?" Elaine interposed. "If you imagine I'm going to stand helplessly by and permit you two red-heads to furnish my bungalow in red gingham and dress me in red fluffy ruffles—you have another guess coming! *Red!* I should think there was enough red in your own two heads without wanting it hung all over the bungalow."

Dirk and Flo appeared crestfallen. They were just beginning to have such a nice time. Flo turned on Dirk at once.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself," she accused. "A prospective bride always has the say-so about furnishing her own home, not the prospective groom. You're just like all men—selfish! Any one could see red gingham wouldn't match Elaine's blond coloring. You started this!"

"I started it!" Dirk's pose was come-on-and-we'll-fight. "Be your age, Florence McKain. You were the young lady who overstepped her bounds. You're only the prospective maid of honor. Didn't you say that Elaine should have a red gingham apron with fluffy ruffles, and it was you who asked my opinion in the first place!" He stopped for breath.

"Well, I didn't ask much!" scoffed Flo, not blushing but plain red-faced as well as red-headed.

ELAINE, smiling with satisfaction as they hurled adjectives across the empty kitchen, retired to the living room to furnish it mentally in gold and black, as much chiffon as possible. No need attempting to referee, she thought, for when those red-heads started a fight a referee was as much use as the proverbial fifth wheel on a wagon.

Besides, Elaine was slightly worried in the back of her agile mind, remembering those galling suggestions about washing socks and frying pork chops. She loved Dirk, of course, but no more than she loved the stage or the plaudits

of her audience. A maid! Well, they could have a maid if she continued with her specialty dancing.

A sudden thought wave carried her back to the kitchen, where Dirk and Flo were still blaming each other for ruffling Elaine's feelings.

She slipped her arm around Flo's shoulders, inquiring in honeyed tones:

"I suppose if it were you, Flo, you'd really enjoy frying pork chops and washing socks?"

A flame of torture momentarily clouded Flo's green-flecked brown eyes. Did Elaine know what was buried within her heart and deliberately wish to hurt her? She dismissed the thought as disloyal. Elaine was her best friend."

"It would be fun," Flo admitted, unable to speak an untruth when faced with an issue. "I'd love it, provided I didn't have to work under a sheen of black chiffon—and"—she defended the secret in her heart—"if it were for a man—not some one like Dirk."

"Don't worry, some one like Dirk wouldn't have you," he retorted, resprawling himself on the radiator. "Don't blame me for fighting with your maid of honor, Elaine. Maid of honor! Wild cat of honor is more like it."

Flo remained queerly quiet as Elaine "sshed" Dirk.

"Listen, darlings!" exclaimed Elaine. "I have an idea! And it's so seldom I get one which isn't theatrical. This one is—sensible, honest. I've decided you're both right about that black chiffon idea being—out. But I confess I don't know a thing about furnishing a bungalow in any other fashion. So I'm going to wash my hands of the entire matter, and—"

"Wash your hands of the entire matter?" interposed Dirk, his voice edging on despair. "Elaine, what do you mean? After paying my entire savings of a thousand bucks down on this place, you don't mean you're not going to marry me?"

"Don't be so jumpy at conclusions, Dirk," Elaine reassured him. "I merely mean I'll wash my hands of the furnishing. I want Flo to do it all—just as if it were her very own—for that dream man of hers. And I want you to help Flo."

Again that look of torture crept into Flo's eyes. Dirk burst into laughter.

"That's a hot one. You want me to help Flo! Why, we'd tear the bungalow up by the roots. Don't be a dumb dodo, Elaine. Flo and I never get along about anything."

"You both agreed perfectly about the red gingham curtains," Elaine reminded him. "I should think you could put aside your petty grievances to do this one favor for me. My fiancé and my best friend! I'm ashamed of you both. Why can't you conquer your silly red-headed tempers?"

"*I* could conquer my temper," stated Flo, with deliberate emphasis.

"Oh—and I couldn't?" Dirk challenged. "I suppose you think you control your temper better than I do mine?"

"I don't *think* so," Flo retorted quickly.

"The big idea is to prove matters, rather than to waste words," pointed out Elaine. "You can both do it if you want to. I'm dreadfully busy—and it's so far out here to New Rochelle. I have double rehearsals every day, and both of you are on your vacations, without a thing in the world to occupy your time. Couldn't you do this for me—when I work so hard on the stage?"

"You poor precious," consoled Dirk. "When we're married you won't ever have to look at another stage."

"There goes your black chiffon life, Elaine," laughed Flo impudently.

Elaine said nothing as she glanced from one to the other pleadingly.

"All right," Flo burst out at last. "Little Dirkie 'll park his temper at home and behave long enough to help me furnish the bungalow, won't you, angel?"

"Don't angel me in that tone of voice. You're no better yourself," Dirk came back. "But I'll try it, Elaine, for your sake."

"You're both wonderful—at heart," declared Elaine of the black chiffon ideals, then regarded her jeweled wrist watch. "We'd better be speeding back to Broadway."

There was the usual business of locking the bungalow and bidding it a romantic good-by, then climbing into Dirk's coupé, where Elaine squeezed in between her two beloved redheads to keep peace. This did not help the turmoil in Flo's heart as the car sped along the sun-spattered boulevard toward New York.

THE next day found Flo and Dirk back at the bungalow. Flo held her red lips taut, almost afraid to speak. Dirk had the determined air of a man bound to do or die. A general hint of restraint hovered about the two who were used to venting their tempers on each other, as they went about listing definite purchases necessary to begin the actual furnishing of the bright, new rooms.

They agreed with amiable alacrity on the color schemes and furnishings, which were to carry the predominating notes of red and gray throughout.

Flo in a checkered apron appeared all of twelve years old, instead of her dignified nineteen, and her hair, in the growing out process, hung about her piquant face like a dark coppery frame.

She was having the time of her life. Although her dreams were a paradise never to come true, it was sweet being here in the bungalow with Dirk—furnishing it as though it were her very own, while Dirk, forgetting his temper, began to warm up accordingly.

"Which room shall we furnish first?" inquired Flo late that afternoon when the list had been completed and they had even lunched on hot dog sandwiches and milk—in comparative peace.

Dirk was practical.

"We'll have to order all the furniture at once—at the same store. I haven't the cash to pay for it, you know."

"Sure, I know," she laughed. "Regular American habit. Dollar down and a dollar when they catch you."

Dirk was on the defensive at once.

"Oh! I presume if you married that regular man you're always raving about, he'd be able to pay cash for everything."

"I wouldn't marry him in the first place," she retorted, "and if I did he'd have enough money to pay cash—or—or else—" her voice trailed off and she suddenly swung about to glance out of the window, down the tree aisled street. Did Dirk know who her dream man was? Did he wish to hurt her, too?

"Or else what?" he demanded, blue eyes on fire.

"Or else — nothing! Elaine asked us not to fight, didn't she?"

Silence for a few moments, then Dirk replied in scathing tones:

"Seeing you have such high ideals, it will probably burn you up to accompany me to select furniture on the installment plan."

"Oh, Dirk, be your age," she said, turning brown eyes to meet his blue ones. "Stop acting like a quarrelsome idiot. You take everything I say literally."

"I—be my age? What about you acting yours? After all, it was your aversion to black chiffon that started all this!"

Quick, hot tears filmed Flo's eyes. She had been a fool to help furnish the bungalow—even for Elaine's sake. She couldn't always fight with him to hide her love. It hurt too much. She brushed herself out into the hallway, flinging words as she went.

"If my suggestions and help are so unwelcome you can furnish your darned old bungalow any way you want—here's your list, I'm through! I've tried my best to help and that's all the thanks I get. I don't know why I should care how the old place looks, anyhow—it isn't my bungalow!"

She jammed on her tan béret, flung her cape-coat about her shoulders, scattering the carefully compiled lists about in turmoil as she started for the door.

Dirk's long arm shot out like lightning, resting gently but firmly on her shoulder and tightening there, causing her heart to jump madly.

"Oh, I say, Flo—I'm sorry—honest. Don't rush off like this—please."

His unexpected grasp tightening on her arm cooled her anger. Then, too, she really disliked abandoning the furnishing of the bungalow after such a riotous start. She turned to meet his eyes with a crooked little smile.

Dirk's voice was a bit shaky: "It's funny how we rag at each other, isn't it?"

"It is funny," she admitted, shaking off his hand, "and it's childish and absurd, too."

"You won't go, Flo? I promise to act my twenty-two plus hereafter."

"Well." There was a strange passivity in her eyes.

The coat slipped to the floor. Dirk picked it up and rehung it on the hook in the closet. Flo tossed the béret with good markmanship to the shelf above.

Together they got down on the floor, laughing like two irresponsible children, to retrieve and properly rearrange the lists so heedlessly scattered by Flo.

And only Flo realized how much more fun it was to fight and make up when Elaine was not a witness.

THEY selected the furniture the following day, without the slightest discord in their tastes, and also purchased everything necessary for drapes and trimmings in like manner.

They were still passive friends when the purchases arrived on Friday. A living room suite in gray; a gray living room rug; red end tables; red plaques for the walls; a mirror; one colorful tapestry, combining red and gray. An odd chair of like design and material with a matching ottoman. One red georgette lamp, one gray and a combination of both in parchment.

Saturday found her gayly parked on the ottoman, sewing the voile curtains while Dirk lolled on the floor in an attempt to connect the three lamps in a manner which would conceal the bunglesome cords.

"Later," said Flo wistfully, "you and Elaine could get an apartment grand piano and put the davenport in

front of the fireplace. That would be the final touch. Still — as it is — it's sweet!" She sighed as a stab of longing cut her heart.

"It's my idea of a dream home now," Dirk declared, as he dodged the radiator and crept along the edge of the rug with the lamp wire. "I hope Elaine will like it as well as we do. You know she has such exotic tastes."

"Funny—she picked out—you!"

Dirk dropped the cords. Flo dropped the curtains. They looked at each other. Then they both laughed. Their latest manner of holding their tempers in leash!

"That moves me one up," stated Dirk.

Flo recovered the curtains and continued her hemming. Dirk began to hum.

"Dirk, what about that second bedroom?" asked Flo suddenly. "Elaine won't like it unfurnished. What's the big idea of leaving it as is?"

He poked his head down near the light outlet. "I can't afford two bedroom sets—so I thought later it would come in handy—for—well—er—just—just in case—"

Flo jabbed the needle into her finger, her heart crying "Oh, Dirk!" Aloud she said:

"Good-by, funny red-heads," she called, then turned quickly lest her face betray her

"Ouch! D i r k, you're the biggest sap I ever met!"

He straightened, hostility in his face.

"What do you mean—sap? That makes me two up."

"I don't care how many it makes you up. I mean it! If you think for one minute Elaine's going to give up the stage and fill that vacant room with—with—er—just in cases—you haven't the brains God gave a lobster, Dirk Pomeroy!"

"Listen, Flo—I've tried not to fight with you, but that's going entirely too far. You think because you're Elaine's best friend you know all about her. Well—you're wrong. I know better!"

Flo stood up and started for the bedroom, dragging the curtains behind her, longing to cry.

"All right, have it your own way, Dirk. My advice is to furnish the

room as a library; then you won't be disappointed. You'll at least have a lot of books running around."

With that she disappeared into the bedroom. She loved this bungalow—loved fixing and furnishing it—yet now she felt like running away.

The bedroom was done in gray and light red. The curtains, bedspread and scarfs were red and gray checked tissue gingham with ruffles outlining them. Flo was especially satisfied with that bedroom. It was so clean and crisp looking with its twin beds, dresser and chifforobe in old mahogany.

She seated herself in the boudoir chair covered in gray damask and poked her feet on the accompanying leather footstool, thinking of many things.

FIRST—Elaine.

She had met Elaine almost a year ago, when the two girls had shared a room at the Evelyn Club. Elaine had seemed a glamorous creature to Flo because she was a model. Flo seemed equally glamorous to Elaine, for she made a much better salary, being private secretary to a well known musical comedy producer. It was through Flo that Elaine had lately received her coveted chance as a specialty dancer in a musical comedy, where she was making a hit.

Elaine had encountered Dirk one day when she stopped in a drug store to have a soda on a high stool. Dirk had also been having a soda on a high stool. A most modern, disgraceful flirtation had resulted, and Elaine had brought Dirk up to their newly acquired apartment to meet Flo.

Flo found her dream man in Dirk. And, being the kind of girl who would not take advantage of a friend, she at once turned hostile toward Elaine's red-headed beau, who responded in like manner. The next thing Flo knew, Elaine and Dirk were engaged.

It was after the engagement that Flo had secured the specialty dancer rôle for Elaine, and had tried even more diligently to make an enemy of Dirk by her constant arguing—because she loved him!

Now it seemed Elaine was making a sap of Dirk. Only the other evening she had said:

"I'll let Dirk think I'm going to give up the stage, but you can see, Flo, why I simply can't. I've worked all my life for this chance, honey. I'd be a fool to cast it aside. One can be married any day in the week—"

"Bu—but—the bungalow?" Flo had interposed, feeling somewhat weak in the knees.

"Nice for week-ends—and during slump seasons. Perhaps you'll live with us to keep him from being lonely when I'm on the road."

"No, thank you," Flo had snapped. "I don't care to commute from New Rochelle every day."

Now here was Dirk innocently thinking he might keep that one bedroom vacant—just in case—

Well, what did it matter to her. It was Dirk's funeral. Let him find out for himself what a fool he was. If a man picked himself an orchid he had no business expecting it to turn into a sunflower.

"Well, spitfire?" Dirk poked his head around the door. "Gee, this bedroom is certainly a wow! Boy, I like that red and gray ruffly stuff, Flo, don't you?"

She admitted that she did, eyes queerly downcast.

"I don't want another scrap, Flo, but just answer me this." He sprawled

on the floor, hunching his knees up, boy fashion, regarding her thoughtfully. "If you were being married to that ideal man of yours, what would you do with the spare bedroom?"

Faced with a direct issue she could not evade, she answered, even though every word was an effort.

"If—if I was being married to—to the man I—really—loved, I'd keep it vacant—just in case. Later, if there weren't any 'just in cases' I'd have it made into a den for him, the man I loved. But we're all different. I never did have a black chiffon heart, you see."

"I see," answered Dirk, the expression in his eyes alive—eager.

For some odd reason they avoided each other after that, at times laughing too shrilly in a nervous, constrained fashion.

BY Sunday morning the bungalow was complete, except for hanging the pictures, painting the kitchen furniture, arranging the kitchen curtains, and laying the linoleum.

Elaine came out to view things as they were. She had the look of one who has a secret idea as her eyes rested on her two strangely passive red heads.

"Why the one empty room?" she wanted to know.

Dirk regarded her eagerly, a light in his blue eyes.

"Just in case—" he began.

"Well," she drawled, lighting a cigarette, "if you can't find any use to put it to, I have a plan. Make it into a gymnasium for me. Get hold of an old felt base I can practice on and I'll pick up an electrical exercising machine—why, whatever is the matter, Dirk?"

The expression on his face was so like a little boy being slapped, Flo had to look the other way.

Poor Dirk!

"I merely made the suggestion as long as you two don't seem to know what to do with it!" Elaine shrugged her black chiffon covered shoulders. The odor of crushed roses emanated from her, and, gliding from room to room, she reminded Flo more than ever of a china Dresden doll.

"Don't you—like it?" Flo questioned eagerly.

"Marvelous," Elaine admitted, "although I don't know a thing about furnishing common bungalows in the first place."

"Common!" snapped Dirk. "I think we—that is, Flo—used excellent taste throughout the entire place. I can't see a thing about it that any girl wouldn't love."

"But, my dear one, I am not any girl," Elaine said wisely, "although I wanted it furnished as any girl would like it. Black and gold would have been my idea. By the way, where does the maid sleep?"

"Maid sleep?" Dirk smiled uncomfortably. "Really, Elaine, you were only fooling about a maid, weren't you?"

"Absolutely no. You don't honestly expect me to fry pork chops and wash socks, do you? When I can so much easier dance and pay for a maid to do them for me!"

Dirk's eyes were pin points of rage.

"Then you've never intended to quit the stage? You've only been kidding me all along?"

"Don't be absurd, Dirk. When we first became engaged I wasn't on the stage, I was a model. This specialty number is my golden opportunity. Surely you can't expect me to quit now that I'm being recognized? With a

maid to care for you it won't matter much, will it?"

Flo walked from the living room, leaving them alone. Life was a muddle! Everything was wrong. She scowled at the kitchen radiator as she listened to the sound of their voices, raised in anger.

At last she heard Elaine bang the front door. Knew Dirk was sitting in there alone—with a lot of blasted hopes. Well—what business was it of hers? He *would* have a girl with a black chiffon heart!

She walked slowly into the living room. He was sprawled on the davenport, his chin resting in his hand. He raised troubled blue eyes to meet sorrowful brown ones, and then somehow—they both laughed.

"I'm sorry, Dirk," she offered gallantly. "I tried to warn you."

"I know, but at that she's right, Flo. I really can't expect a girl like Elaine to tie herself down to cooking and washing when she can dance and pay for a maid and still have plenty left over to buy the clothes she loves—and—as she pointed out—help pay for the furniture. She's keen about that piano idea, Flo. Wants to buy it right away."

Flo remained silent, disappointment overwhelming her. Well, what had she expected? That he'd fall in love with her just because Elaine wanted her own way? Was it any of her business if Dirk wanted to make a fool of himself? She couldn't trust her voice.

"I guess," he added lamely, "a guy like me is lucky to have a girl like Elaine, in the first place."

Angry rage blinded her—hot resentment filled her heart.

"Are you going to help me hang these pictures or not?" she snapped, longing to hurl something at him for—for being so spineless—and for letting it hurt her so.

"It's a nice day and I'm hungry," she added. "We'll eat at that restaurant down the street and afterward go for a walk. So hurry up!"

He hurried, but they didn't take a walk after all. As he was hanging the first picture the ladder slipped and suddenly both it and Dirk were sprawled across the floor, Flo emitting a screaming sob.

SHE reached him in a mad little rush, forgetting everything but concern for the man she loved. She rested his head against her heart, touched almost reverently the silently pale lips of the boy with whom she had fought endlessly.

"Dirk—oh, Dirk—darling—"

He opened two amazed blue eyes. Except for a bump on his forehead he wasn't hurt, and the queer look in his eyes was decidedly not from the fall. He had seen the momentarily unguarded light in those soft brown eyes.

"Flo—" His voice was incredulous. "Why—Flo!"

She drew away quickly, pale as a ghost. Realizing her foolishness, she laughed shakily.

"I—I—thought you—had—killed yourself. That's what I thought, Dirk—see?"

His arms reached up and drew her down—down.

"That isn't all I saw, Flo. That look in your eyes—when—when you said—darling. Flo—kiss me."

"No—no—Dirk—no!" Panic in her eyes now.

But for once Dirk was master of the situation, Flo being unable to fight back—against his arms—against his eager, seeking lips—against the trend of her own emotion. Ecstasy engulfed

her as his lips closed down gently on hers, without a second request.

Much—very much—later, she was still passive under his lips, between attacks of amazed wonder, and Dirk had completely forgotten the bump on his head.

"Flo—it's you I love—you!"

"No—Dirk—no—" weakly.

"Yes, darling—yes!"

His hands caressed her red hair.

"We've been a couple of blind idiots, sweetheart. We might have known there was some reason we ragged at each other so. Flo—you do love me—too—don't you?"

"That's why I fought with you all along—dear."

"Flo, then — I'm — the—dream—man?"

"Y-yes, you d-darned fool! Do you think I'd have let you kiss me for the last half hour if you weren't? But, oh—Dirk, what are we going to do about it?"

"Do about it?" he inquired, then moaned, "Oh—I forgot—Elaine. Gee, what a miserable break for all of us."

During the remainder of the day they were ridiculously happy and utterly miserable by turns. They finally decided, through a sea of misery, that they would have to give each other up.

Anything else appeared like a breach of trust. Noble red-heads that they were—loving now as deeply as they had fought—yet still remembering there is such a thing as loyalty in the world. They were Elaine's beloved red-heads. They couldn't—wouldn't—double cross her!

A crushed, miserable Flo crept back to the apartment. Elaine was surprised to see her still awake when she came in from the last performance. Nor did she miss the circled brown eyes and the quizzical smile.

"How goeth the red gingham bungalow?" she asked, "and what did my dear fiancé have to say after I told him what I intended doing after my marriage?"

"Nothing."

"Didn't he say anything?"

"I don't remember. We were—busy."

"How—how funny!"

"Yes—wasn't it?"

"Going to finish up everything tomorrow?"

"Perhaps. If Dirk doesn't fall off any more ladders."

Elaine giggled. "Did he fall off a ladder? I'll bet he looked comical. He must have been upset."

Flo frowned. "It wasn't so very funny. He hurt his head badly."

"Poor darling! Did you rub it for him, Flo?"

"Oh—don't be ridic!" Flo replied, slumping down into bed and pulling the covers over her head to hide her telltale eyes.

"Sorry, honey. I'll be out when the place is completed. I have a little surprise—for both my beloved redheads."

Flo didn't answer.

Elaine seated herself before the dressing table to comb out her pale gold hair.

DIRK and Flo were more than miserable the next day. Their sacrifice seemed to sag in the middle as they completed the kitchen, hanging the red gingham curtains as the final touch.

They walked disconsolately about the five rooms, Flo's head on Dirk's shoulder, his arm protectively around her waist.

"It's not right," he said suddenly. "It's a shame. We belong to each other, we always did. We have red

gingham hearts and Elaine's is black chiffon. Honey, I can't help it. I know that sounds crazy, but it's true, isn't it? You'd love living here—wouldn't you?"

Flo raised tender brown eyes to his questioning ones.

"And washing out your socks and frying pork chops—and hoping there would be some 'just in cases' to put in our vacant room, Dirk. But it can't be—it can't. It wouldn't be fair to Elaine."

"I suppose you're right, Flo," he whispered, tightening his arm about her, "but it isn't fair—besides, it was her fault for throwing us together to furnish the bungalow."

"Yes," Flo admitted, "but she did it to conquer our tempers and because she was so busy—and not for us to fall in love with each other."

A sound on the porch interrupted them. A moment later Elaine herself appeared, tastily garbed in a violet chiffon outfit which must have set her back at least two weeks' salary. She smiled as she seated herself on one of the newly painted kitchen chairs.

"The red won't come off, will it?" she inquired teasingly.

"Well, I should say not." Dirk was proud of his paint job.

"All right—and now listen, you two redheads, it's a dandy bungalow, and you've done a nice job, not to mention the better one of completely curing your tempers."

Flo's eyes flew to Dirk's in amazement.

"And," Elaine continued, "it's heck to break the sad news, but Dirk, you and I are not getting married after all. You see, I have an offer to appear in talking pictures, so little Elaine's going to Hollywood."

Dirk attempted a picture of despair with blue eyes nearly dancing out of his head.

"What?" he cried, relief mingling with amazement.

"Yes," repeated Elaine, "I belong to the stage, and I want to stay there—always. A husband would only cramp my style, and I'm afraid I'd never make the proper sort of a wife for you, Dirk. I still have my black chiffon ideals—I couldn't possibly live a red gingham life—so Dirk, it's a nice sparkler, and I hate to lose it—but—here you are. I'm sorry—but no doubt you'll find a gingham wife for your bungalow. Good luck! And good-by to you both. I'm leaving for Hollywood—to-night."

Dirk and Flo stood utterly speechless. Unable to tell Elaine this was what they had wished. Their impressive silence, however, told Elaine more than mere words ever could have.

She walked to the doorway, then turned and said laughingly with a husky hint of tears:

"Funny red-heads! Remember—I love you both. I'll send the grand piano along for a wedding gift. Good-by."

And she was gone, with a final whiff of crushed rose perfume and a swiftly blown kiss.

"Wedding present," echoed Flo, tears filming her brown eyes. "Oh, Dirk—she knew all along!"

They ran to the window to recall her, but she entered a taxi and merely waved another kiss to their beckoning hands.

"Gee, she must have known, even before we did."

"And they say girls of the stage are selfish," said Flo thoughtfully.

"She's a peach, Flo. We ought to furnish that spare room in black and gold, with black chiffon drapes, so she

could have a place to stay when she's in town."

Flo shook her head, being more intuitive than Dirk.

"No use, sweetheart. Elaine wouldn't stay with us anyhow, I'm afraid."

And Flo was right. Elaine visited them briefly after the little red-haired girl they named Elaine was born.

But she never remained in the bungalow overnight.

Perhaps she didn't want her two beloved red-heads ever to know how much she regretted her lack of a red gingham heart.

NOBODY'S BUSINESS

WHEN the soft shaded light is streaming on your hair,
And you sit across from me in the big easy chair,
Somehow my throat gets tight, and the wonder of it grows—
Like nobody's business—and I'm thrilled from head to toes!

When the far gleaming trails are calling us to ride,
And we take the car out and make whoopee side by side,
Somehow my heart beats fast, and the mystery of it seems—
Like nobody's business—and my head is filled with dreams!

When that light, happy look shows deep within your eyes,
And we talk together, and you make me feel so wise,
Somehow you work magic, and the marvel of it wakes—
Like nobody's business—for it's love that gives and takes!

—Peter A. Lea

Thankfulness

By EDGAR DANIEL KRAMER

THOUGH I am grateful for the harvest's yield,
The largess that my hands have garnered in
From orchard, garden and from furrowed field
And stored away in creaking barn and bin:
The golden honey from the dripping comb,
The ruddy apples from the gnarled limb,
The corn and wheat that tiptoed from the loam
To hear the singing of the Seraphim,
I am most humbly thankful, Lord, for her,
Whose kindly hands are ever a caress,
Whose kisses, like a breath of fragrant myrrh,
Are Love's delightful balm for weariness,
As in the glory gleaming from her eyes
The earth becomes as fair as Paradise.

Google

Planets of Destiny

By CAROL YOUNG

BY the application of the scientific principles of astrology your questions will be answered in these pages. But the publishers of this magazine, and also the conductor of this department, do not hold themselves responsible for the accuracy of the replies, inasmuch as many readers furnish incorrect birth data and others do not know the hour of their birth. This department is conducted only for such help or interest as readers may obtain from it.

One question is allowed each reader. Question must be accompanied by coupon to be found on page 463. Please do not ask questions concerning death, speculation or the whereabouts of lost property.

It is very important that you give the following data: time of birth (hour of the day or night), date, month, year and place. Also sex.

No personal questions will be answered by direct mail, but if you will send ten cents in stamps to cover cost of mailing, All-Story will be glad to return to you a short estimate of your character and of the future influences for those in your Zodiacal sign, giving suggestions for at least the next two years.

DAILY ASTROLOGICAL GUIDE

For the Next Two Weeks

November 29—Better in the evening than before; slow and easy won't hurt.

November 30—Again better in the evening; stick to routine during the day.

December 1—Guard the finances; avoid extravagance; save your money.

December 2—Stick to your usual line of march; take no chances with new items.

December 3—A rough day for most people; control temper; avoid accidents.

December 4—Best hours around noon to-day; avoid friction balance of day.

December 5—Better before evening; rest and recuperate during later hours.

December 6—Stay away from the lower desires; start nothing new.

December 7—A low day; don't believe all your feelings seem to tell you.

December 8—Here, at last, is a good day; make it count constructively.

December 9—Generally favorable, except in the afternoon.

December 10—Uncertain and unreliable; start nothing of importance to-day.

December 11—Later hours good for travel and study; look ahead and work.

December 12—Morning and afternoon weak; then improving for most folks.

PERSONAL INFLUENCES

Those born December 30 to January 3 are now going through a set of vibrations that urge them to guard their health and finances, with close attention to avoiding the kind of troubles that are caused by their own ambitions and enthusiasms. The women of these dates should not put too much reliance on the performance of men in close relationship for awhile. Natives of March 31 to April 2 are now being considerably upset; but it is all for the best and when the smoke of battle has cleared away they will find

themselves better off, even though many changes have been registered. Natives of July 9 to 12 feel a strong promise of financial and other expansive benefit, but the promise is apt to be more than will materialize—avoid speculation in all its many phases. Those born August 7 to 11 now possess greater strength, both physically and mentally, than is usual; it is a period of accomplishment, but there is at the same time danger of overdoing. Steer a middle course. People born August 27 to 30 are now apt to yield to emotional strains that would lead them astray; resist all such temptations, if this applies to you, in both personal and business matters. Those whose birthdays fall between November 13 and 18 are being stimulated by the softer side of life, but should guard against all negative and sensational indulgence. Children of November 29 to December 12 can now make progress through dealings with superiors if they will be diplomatic and considerate. Those born December 11 to 30 can make immediate mental advances, as well as progressing in trade or occupational ways.

RONALD COLMAN

A number of my readers have written in to inquire about their favorites on the screen since the story appeared here about Charley Ray. And it is very much all right with me to have you do so, for I want to give you what you want if it is in my power to give.

Many have asked about that justly popular star, Mr. Ronald Colman, the hero of "Bulldog Drummond," "The Dark Angel," "Raffles," and numerous other strong vehicles in which he contributed stirring portrayals. They want to know what sort of man he really is, without the usual bunk that is sent out to newspapers by the publicity—or duplicity—experts of the studios.

Come on—write to me if you like these notes on the picture people. Tell me about whom you want me to write and I will get their horoscopes and interpret them for you. How would you like to get the inside stuff on Greta Garbo, Buddy Rogers, Charley Farrell, Norma Shearer, and others? I'm here to give service. It's up to you to tell me what you want.

About Ronald Colman:

He was born, they tell me, on February 9, 1891, in Surrey, England. That puts his Sun in the twenty-first degree of the sign Aquarius, in conjunction with the benefic Jupiter, the planet of expansion and money making.

The third decanate (ten degrees) of Aquarius—those born February 9 to 19, inclusive—gives us people who should always try to multiply themselves to the general public, through writing, acting, scientific invention, reporting or in some other way that will send out a personal service to the many. They are under the rulership, or, as we say in astrologically technical language, under the disposal of the Moon acting through Libra. This explains to the student of astrology why these people can succeed in the dramatic, sporting and literary fields of endeavor and still be awful flops when it comes to their personal and more intimate affairs.

Most of those in this decanate get married, and usually at too early an age, to which rule Ronald Colman is perhaps unhappily not an exception. He is married—sent for his wife, they say, after he had made a mark for himself in Hollywood, and she came over from England. He prefers the mountain tops and is sometimes gone for a week at a time. Recently he and Bill Powell and another good actor went on an extended vacation to England. It is typical of these third decanate Aquarians to want to get away from the world for a chance to commune with their own souls. They seek and get their best strength from within. And when they have thus temporarily departed from the outside world of buzzing human contacts they are able to return stronger and better than when they went away, even if it was only to seek the silence of an hour or two in a private room.

It has been said that the movies and the drama are sister arts. But this does not seem to work out in astrological symbology. I was in Hollywood for three years, during which time I met more than three thousand actors and actresses personally—at least that is the number of horoscopes of movie people I have in my files, although I must have obtained the birthdays of many more. My analysis of all this data leads me to the conclusion that the movies and the drama are not sisters—they are not brother and sister, either—they are arts in the relationship of husband and wife! That may sound weird, but Ronald Colman is one of the best of examples from which to prove the matter. His Sun is in Aquarius, the sign of the partner, figuring from Leo, the sign ruled by the Sun. And we always find Aquarians, such as Mr. Colman, seeing things and feeling things for others—no wonder he is a good actor. He knows how the other fellow feels, sometimes better than he could explain who he is himself, or what he is himself. The same could be said of Ramon Novarro and numerous others of this sign.

Thousands of years ago the ancients told us that the fifth division of the horoscope was that which is related to the drama. Every night the Sun enters the fifth section of the heavens just as the curtain is rising on the first act, wherever you may happen to be on the face of the globe. And when the movies open, in the big cities, in the morning, the Sun is in the opposite division, or house, of the heavens. Opposites make partners. Leo, the sign of the Sun, is the fifth sign, corresponding to the fifth house. Aquarius, the sign of Mr. Colman, is the opposite sign, corresponding to the movies, the partner of the drama. It will be a marvelous day for both the movies and the drama when both realize this connection.

Colman should always take rôles in which he is for the most part the under dog, triumphing only by a superhuman effort at the last moment of the story, after it seems he is in a hole from which he could not possibly extract himself. This is shown by his natal Venus in square (adverse) aspect to Mars. Strange as it may be, audience sympathy with him is not the ordinary kind: we don't want him to get the girl half as much as we want to see him get out of trouble for his own personal sake.

The year 1931 holds but little of further advancement for him; and there is a poor period during the last half of the year in which he must be very careful to avoid losing ground or money through a combination of carelessness on his own part and the changing attitude of his superiors. It would be a good time for him to leave on a six months' vacation around the middle of July, 1931. It will hurt him less to be temporarily forgotten and then stage a comeback in 1932 than for him to stand and face the music all through the latter months of next year.

The Matrimony Service is being squeezed out this time by the many and insistent calls for occupational suggestions. Please be patient and realize that space is limited. Will be with you on the matrimonial decision dates in the next issue.

OCCUPATIONAL ADVICE

D. B., born December 24, 1913; study for business and secretarial work.

R. C., born July 27, 1915; chemistry, invention and mechanics.

M. C., born May 14, 1904; it's a long pull, but stick to your art and designing; you can some day be a good teacher along this line.

J. D., Jr., born February, 1914; you forgot to mention the day of birth.

Mrs. L. F., born July 28, 1888; something connected with the theater.

T. H., born May 29, 1893; you're in the right kind of work, distributing, traveling, etc.; keep studying and work on up. The last couple of years have been disheartening, I know; things will get better.

H. H., January 3, 1916; study and move about; you will gather material for use when you are more mature; avoid financial and occupational troubles.

L. R. H., September 7, 1901; better wait at least five years before going into business for yourself. You didn't mention what line.

A. B. J., July 12, 1918; neither of those jobs looks like your best line; but the bookkeeping comes closest; analytical work will be your forte.

J. K., December 27, 1902; legal, financial or detective work; but this is a poor time, till the end of 1931, to start any new independent venture.

V. K., September 16, 1914; please mention your preferred lines; you are mentally very strong and should develop your talents.

I. E. La V., July 21, 1912; you're on the right path now; keep on and you can arrive at a most enviable position in dramatic work.

A. E. McQ., May 11, 1918; get into some-

THIS COUPON MUST ACCOMPANY EACH QUESTION ASKED

CAROL YOUNG
ALL-STORY MAGAZINE,
280 Broadway, New York City.

This coupon is not good after Dec. 13. One question is allowed each reader.

Date of Birth..... ....., ... Time.....
MONTH DATE YEAR A.M. OR P.M.

Place..... Sex.....
MALE OR FEMALE

QUESTION:

.....

.....

Name.....

Street and No.....

City..... State.....

If you wish interpretation of your Zodiacal sign, inclose ten cents (see rules).

thing where the head and hand can coöperate; keep away from aviation, no matter how much tempted.

R. O., February 28, 1916; continue your education till at least twenty-one years old, working at whatever you can find to do; then marry carefully.

F. F. R., December 27, 1908; politics and government service. General conditions not so good for awhile with you, but you can eventually win.

M. S., August 10, 1913; something related to the products of metal or fire; mental work connected with travel, although you can remain in one place if you want to.

M. S., July 9, 1888; you have been in a bad spot or two, and still are; what you need is more training and development of your talents.

E. H. M., April 15 1896; executive work of a practical type—connected with handling of concrete materials more than in subtle human management.

M. R., June 1, 1912; can't see much prospect of your becoming a famous movie star; better try selling or secretarial work—connected with dramatics if you can find the right position.

R. B., November 17, 1911; you can do much better than steno or waitress work if you will prepare for financial employment, such as in a bank.

M. L., December 19, 1913; artistic and literary; you'll have to be mighty good to succeed at both, so choose one at a time and work hard.

B. M., July 12, 1915; if assistant to a doctor is what you mean, go ahead with it—a good line for you. But straight nursing is not so strong.

H. H., December 15, 1900; with proper training and plenty of hard work you can achieve something along that line; I wish you well.

A. V. K., January 25, 1896; something along original lines, service to mankind, combination of head and hand working together; favors through those in positions above you.

M. K., October 28, 1916; the financial side of artistic, musical and theatrical work is O. K. for you—better than as a performer.

V. O., December 28, 1912; teaching, analytical work, government service and editing—take your choice, but don't try them all at once.

Mrs. A. R., February 22, 1875; don't try being too independent now; and don't follow your emotions blindly in anything; make no investment; sell your personal services and abilities as a detail worker.

Mrs. H. E. L., September 2, 1886; you're in for a few uncomfortable tests; don't be unreasonable about your husband's work, or his lack of it.

E. P., August 5, 1915; something moveable, connected with travel, distribution or entertainment.

G. I. F., November 6, 1915; not so hot on that kindergarten work for you; better get into something more mature; avoid children and the public.

P. D., August 18, 1911; you can be a financial success at almost anything; your trouble is apt to be laziness; kill that and cultivate your organizing ability.

L. O., May 5, 1913; business preferred to teaching.

J. E., November 22, 1909; you certainly are artistic; look out for the negative influence of women and those younger, and make good in a career.

THIS COUPON WITH TEN CENTS AND A STAMPED ADDRESSED ENVELOPE MUST ACCOMPANY REQUEST FOR HANDWRITING ANALYSIS

JOHN FRASER,
ALL-STORY MAGAZINE,
280 Broadway,
New York City.

This coupon is not good after Dec. 18. A stamped addressed envelope and ten cents must be inclosed when forwarding.

I inclose ten cents, together with handwriting specimen for
—Service for Sweethearts.
—Your Career.
—Character Analysis.
(Check which you prefer. One coupon must accompany each choice.)

Name .....

Street and No.....

City.....State.....

Handwriting and Happiness

By JOHN FRASER

JOHN FRASER, gifted handwriting expert, who has made a name for himself both in his native England and here in America, will analyze your handwriting. If you wish to know whether your sweetheart is the right man for you to marry, inclose samples of your own and your sweetheart's handwritings and address your letter to Mr. Fraser, care "Service for Sweethearts." If you wish his help in finding the profession for which you are best fitted, address him care "Your Career." For general reading, care "Character Analysis."

You may take advantage of one or any service, but ten cents and a coupon must accompany each request for handwriting analysis. Coupon will be found on page 464.

Mr. Fraser bases his judgments on the scientific rules of graphology. In no case does he forecast the future or attempt to reveal the past. Scientific graphology undertakes only to reveal the inner secrets of your nature.

As many answers will be given on these pages as space permits. All other questions will be answered by mail. A stamped, addressed envelope must accompany your request for analysis.

AN experience I had the other day while driving along a road in farming country reminded me of similar events on the road of life. I was on my way to visit a friend and the only path leading to his home was a well worn service road. The ruts were deep and long and in spite of careful driving, the two back tires persisted in getting into them.

After reaching my destination and examining the wheels of my car I could not help thinking how injurious ruts are to property as well as to progress in life. During the past few days I have received dozens of letters from readers of ALL-STORY who confess they have got "into a rut," and see no possible way of escape.

To those readers I extend my sympathy, since there is nothing more disappointing in this world than to be doing one's work in treadmill fashion. It is the canker that breeds disappointment, and the blight that kills ambition. But—I maintain no one is justified in getting into this condition of mind or circumstances. We can travel just as easily on the concrete highways of life as on the rutty service roads which wear us to a frazzle. It is an attitude of mind, and a larger outlook is required to steer us out of Rut Alley.

SERVICE FOR SWEETHEARTS

address so we've decided
Mabel
My curiosity has been piqued
Jim

(Miss Mabel P., Council Bluffs, Iowa.) You evidently know how to pick a sweetheart even though you are only nineteen years of age. At least, I notice that your boy friend, Jim, is "all there" and then some. He is a go-ahead fellow who has not only got vision, but a great deal of faith in himself. Just what a boy of his age should have. From what I can gather from your own pen strokes, Mabel, I see you have considerable modesty. You are a humble-minded girl who would never think more highly of yourself than you had a right to think. You might be called unsophisticated. But what can we expect at nineteen and considering your environment? That you will be very happy with Jim as a lover and husband when the time comes, I have not the slightest doubt. He is a nice sort of boy who has all the earmarks of a good citizen and a better man. My advice to you both, however, is wait four or five years before you think of setting up house. By doing so you will give your sweetheart a chance to make good, and at the same time afford yourself an opportunity of learning how a household should be run. I wish you the best of luck. Write me again, won't you?

about and I am at ease and cool.
Helen
make my efforts a bit more
Thomas

(Miss Helen N., Atchison, Kan.) I felt sorry for you when I read your letter with its sad tale of an unfaithful lover. It may be a trite saying, but it is nevertheless a true one that, "the course of true love never did run sweet." It is evidently the way yours is working out, Helen. In the first place, how in the world did you bump into this lump of inconsistencies? "Tommy," as you call him, is no fit companion for a girl like you. He is uncouth and materialistic, while you are the essence of gentleness and spirituality. I knew this the moment I looked at his initial strokes and read your words "he is all right at times, but he never seems to be without a certain egotism and meanness." Of course he is full of himself, and as far as selfishness is concerned it will always be Number One with Mr. Tom. If I do nothing else for you, Helen, I want to impress upon you the fact that Tom should be given a wide berth. He will only break your heart and shorten your days. Far better to cut this connection right away than to spend years of misery and repining. This is not good news to you, but I know it is sound advice.

was very much thrilled by your
enclosed with my letter to you Ja
Effie
Sam

(Miss Effie J., Marion, Ind.) You impress me as being a girl who is on her toes all the time. You don't believe in letting the grass grow under your feet, as the saying is. Your boy friend will have to "step on the gas" if he ever hopes to run neck to neck with his future wife. As a matter of fact, Sam is a little slow when I measure him with you. You have by far the more distinctive personality of the two, and you are likely to become the big boss in your love nest if you are not careful. You are a girl who knows her way about in the world, and requires

no "mere man" to help her get what she wants. All this is very fine and dandy, but where does poor Sam come in? He will always be playing "second fiddle" when you're around I am afraid, Effie. There is much to be discovered in Sam, but you must contrive to give him every chance as only a real woman can. You will know the little ways in which you can make him feel happy and full of self-respect—and this without necessarily doing that intelligent and peppy personality of yours any injustice. You are apt to be the more positive of the two, but this doesn't mean that Sam is not worth while, too, even if he is more quiet about it. It is up to you to even the balance, and you will be greatly the happier wife for doing it. Sam appreciates you. You must appreciate him equally. If you have real love for this boy, you can make a happy marriage of it if you will thoughtfully try to adjust your nature to his.

You spoke about people
Sophie
The destributor must first apply to
Andrew

(Miss Sophie F., Key West, Fla.) You are a healthy-minded girl, but a little too emotional. You dream far too many dreams in the course of the day. You would be much better to come down to earth more often. I'm sure that is one of the reasons why Andrew tells you so many times that "he doesn't understand you," as you said in your letter. As far as Andrew is concerned, I like that fellow's personality. He is a straightforward sort of chap, and one who would always do his bit. He is no shirker, either in love or war. In the matter of compatibility, I would say you are a well-matched pair, with enough in common to make you agreeable companions. You have the imaginative power while your fiancé has the business sense. Of course neither of you are angels. Underlying your better natures there is a lot of the devil in both of you. You seem to have an impatient disposition while Andrew has a mean temper when he does not get his own way. In spite of these "little foxes that spoil the vines," I see no reason why you two young folk should not make a go of it. My blessing will go with you.

YOUR CAREER

Flawless, Clear Rich & Full

(Miss Olga McC., Greenwich, Conn.) Your pen formations inform me that you are a business woman to the finger tips. You have had the advantage of a good education, and you are using it to the best advantage. I am glad to tell you that I think you are in the right position—private secretary to an executive. A woman of your caliber would always be a blessing to a busy man. Your business acumen is pronounced all through your penmanship, as well as your capability in other directions. You would be very diplomatic in the handling of people. I could never see a book canvasser, however smart, getting to the boss when you were around. If I were to comment on your "not-so-good" qualities, I would start in by telling you that you have a mean temper. It is quick and fiery. Though you have a certain amount of patience on occasions, on the other hand you have a streak of childishness in your system. Cut out this unthoughtful quality and you'll find you will become a hundred per cent more beloved and be more successful in the long run.

to hear what you can

(Miss Jessie T., Aurora, Ill.) Your quick-thinking mind must be a source of gratification to those with whom you have contact. You are a girl who is continually on the move. Your brain never rests day or night. As a matter of fact, you are burning the candle at both ends, as the saying is. You jump from one thing to another. There is very little real concentration in your make-up. You belong to the type who are always extremely enthusiastic when anything new is proposed. You throw yourself into the details of the proposition with a vim and energy which is remarkable to behold. But there soon comes a time when the gilt wears off your gingerbread, and you get up some morning to find that you have lost your enthusiasm, and back you go into a state of passivity. There is no deny-

ing the fact that you are a cultured woman who has always kept well abreast of the times. You are well read and would be a pleasant companion to have around. I further see that you are no spendthrift. You would be a shrewd buyer whether in the purchase of a house or of a handkerchief. Altogether, I would class you among the girls who have been blessed with a good supply of common sense as well as UNcommon sense.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

as Done Hopkinsville Ouzzy

(Miss Viola O., Toronto, Ont.) Your penmanship clearly indicates to me that you are a born artist. You are intuitive and inspirational. You have the sensitiveness of one who lives in the clouds most of the time. It makes you hard to live with. You don't know your own mind from one moment to another. You go to extremes, up on the mountain tops one day and down in the valleys the next. Art should be your forte. You have the creative mind, and since you told me that art in all its forms appeals to you, I would suggest you get busy with your paint brush and put these visions which that mind of yours is so full of, on to canvas. I have no fear for your future, since you have all the earmarks of a successful artist. I discover that you have a good head for business as well as the brains of a creator. This ought to stand you in good stead, when it comes to selling your work. So many of your type lack this essential and consequently lose out in many a deal. I am glad to have had this opportunity of advising you concerning your life work, and I wish you all the luck possible in your chosen profession.

Soon as possible

(Miss Betty M., Brunswick, Ga.) You impress me as being a girl who has a large outlook on life. You are conscientious in all you undertake—a friend who would never betray a confidence. Moreover, you are self-sacrificing and are always willing to go out of your way to help those less fortunate than yourself. Sentimentally, you could be counted on to be steadfast to the one to whom you gave your affection. If anything, you are a little conceited and proud of your accomplishments. It is true that you are a well informed person whose knowledge of men and things is above the average. This, however, is nothing more than the rest of us have, and consequently its market value in Wall Street is not among the highs at the present moment. Your strongest qualities include discrimination, economy, and a quick perception. You would always have a desire to live peaceably with your neighbors. Your humility might be mistaken for gullibility. A little more backbone when it comes to standing up for your rights would not be a bad thing for you to possess.

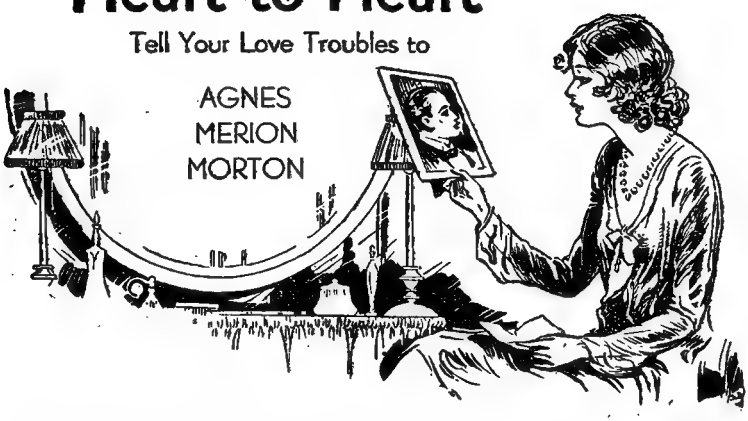
IF YOU MISS AN ISSUE—

of ALL-STORY in which one of your favorite authors appeared, we will try to supply you if you will write direct to the Editors, 280 Broadway. But it sometimes happens that the issue is sold out at once as soon as it reaches the stands, and readers are disappointed. The best way is to order your copy in advance, or, better still, send in your subscription and have ALL-STORY delivered regularly to your door. Join the happy family of ALL-STORY subscribers. Then you need never be without the issue you want.

Heart-to-Heart

Tell Your Love Troubles to

AGNES
MERION
MORTON



MRS. MORTON wants you to feel that she is a friend—some one to whom it is a comfort to tell your problems, who will advise and encourage you in your struggle for happiness, and who is always here to help. She is interested in you. Write to her freely, addressing your letter care All-Story Magazine, 280 Broadway, N. Y. C.

Every letter is confidential.

As Mrs. Morton receives so many letters, she cannot publish answers to all in the space allotted to her. Some, therefore, are answered by mail. Be sure to inclose a stamped, addressed envelope with your question.

THE letter of Childless, who wrote to tell us she is in love with an ex-convict, has aroused a great deal of interest and sympathy, as is evidenced by the following:

DEAR MRS. MORTON:

I came across a letter signed Childless in this week's issue, and am going to tell her that she is not the first nor the only one that loves an ex-convict. I hope you will not publish the town, or I should say city, nor my name.

I was brought up very quietly, the eldest of nine children; at the age of eighteen I married a boy whom I had known all my life. I was tired of housework and thought marriage would be a way out. It was only jumping from the frying pan into the fire. I left my friends, parents, every one that loved me, and went seventeen hundred miles away to live with his people. It was drudge from morning until night, until death took my husband after three years of married life. I came back after settlements were at an end and lived at home on my money. I was not satisfied with one taste of matrimony, but I jumped into it again one year and a half later. I did not love my husband; he dazzled me, because he had so much money, was always faultlessly dressed, and after knowing him three months I married him. A year later a little daughter came to me, and I was happy as I had had no kiddies by my first husband.

For two years we lived, on what I do not know. He was a gambler on the market, and before long was in business for himself; his company progressed so successfully that I had my own maid, a car when I wanted it, and by then two kiddies. Then came the blow. He was arrested for the theft of ninety-six thousand dollars. The judge said it was stolen money from the first, and for three years of business, wealth and luxuries of every kind he got a sentence of seven years. Ninety-six thousand dollars is no small sum, and it was a boom for this city. I was the innocent victim, not knowing anything about his business, and he would not explain when I asked him. When he was sentenced I had a ten-day-old baby. What I went through nobody knows. I visited him until now, and I have secured a parole for the 18th of December. I love my husband now, and have turned every stone possible to get him released. I have no income, only what our Welfare gives to me. Yet we are waiting. Some of the farmer shareholders

Google

send clothes in to my kiddies and they think their daddy is sick, but it is a long, long wait. We have four years to make up for, and when he comes out we will be a happy family.

As you say, Mrs. Morton, Childless's boy friend was honest; he need not have told her of his term in prison, and if he is honest and loves you, Childless, take your chance of happiness. Your marriage has every chance of being a success, because you both have suffered, you wanting him, he wanting you. I know of a family not far from me; the wife went to the prison gate, took him to the city hall; they were married and have four kiddies now and adore each other. He changed his name and holds a good position. I know of others, even here in this one small city, and no doubt there are hundreds. One mistake is nothing; we all make them, and with a little encouragement we can work wonders. I have suffered, God knows what, for four years, but it will soon be over and I am only thirty-three so have my life before me. Thank you for bothering with this episode.

Sincerely,
IRISH.

Thank you, rather, both for Childless and myself, for writing it. I believe that you will yet be happy—love and trust like yours must reap results—and I am sure that a man as able as your husband will succeed at anything to which he turns his talents.

DEAR MRS. MORTON:

I've read Childless's letter and your answer. I notice you say you have no case to advise from. I can give you two. My sister married an ex-convict, a man who served time for the same thing Hal did. Is she happy? Yes, just ask her and she'll tell you she wouldn't take a fortune for him. There's another couple near me who are happy also.

Childless, do you think it quite fair to hold that against him? I think he's proved he can be honest, don't you? Not only that, but, my dear, he has given you a chance to see if you really care. I am not speaking of something I know nothing about. I loved a convict once, and then I turned him down because of an infatuation for another man, and have I paid? Yes, a thousand times. No one should know any better than you the delicate torture a man can use on a woman who loves him.

I, also, have a little girl, fifteen months old, and she's the image of her father, but do you think he cares? No, he's going his own sweet way, and will until he finds some one he can really love; then she'll pay him back for the many nights I've spent in loneliness. If God can forgive us for the many mistakes we make, why can't we forgive our fellow men?

Mrs. Morton, I hope you will print this for Childless to see it. Sorry it's so long, but it's been bottled up inside me until I just felt I had to tell some one. I would like to have Childless write to me.
EDNA FULTON.

DEAR MRS. MORTON:

I have been reading your Heart-to-Heart department, and see how you have helped many an unfortunate girl and I just know you can help me. To begin with, I was married a few months before I was seventeen, and had my first baby boy before I was eighteen, and my baby girl when I wasn't quite twenty. They are very sweet and I love them. My husband is eight years older than I; I am Jewish and he is another religion. When I married him every one warned me, and my folks begged me to divorce him, but they were all talking so because I married out of my nationality and said I'd never live long with him. My pride kept me from letting my folks get annulment.

I realized from the time my first child came that I made a mistake, but before I could do anything my second was due. I would like to divorce him, but when I look ahead and see my children in a home (for you see, my parents are not able to take care of them) then I shudder and say I'll stay. My husband is always cursing; he has no respect for me in front of my friends or babies; he also gets angry—I mean real wild—at any little thing I don't do right, or that he says I don't do right. Or if the children cry he picks up anything that's in his sight and throws it at me or the wall; he's always grabbing the knife and telling me he'll use it some time. You may think he's insane, but he's perfectly sane. He never asks me to go anywhere with him; we have a car, but I never ride in it. You see, I am just a few months past twenty and still want some good times. My husband always goes out and never comes back until midnight. When I ask him where he's been he answers, none of your business.

My friends tell me I am a fool to live with him, but what can I do? I know if my children understood they would not want me to suffer as I am. Please help me with your good advice because I can't stand it any longer. I sure would appreciate it very much.
DORA.

No, I suppose your husband is not insane in one sense of the word, but a violent and uncontrolled temper is akin to insanity, and he is practically as irresponsible as one whose mind is gone. But, Dora, although I understand your difficulty, and know that you are drawn two ways, it seems to me that the only thing you can do, if you want to do right by the children as well as yourself, is to separate from your husband. And there the law will help you.

Go to a lawyer and tell him just what you have told us, and all the details. He can advise you more practically than I can, of course, at this distance. He will no doubt be able to

secure a separation for you at once, if not an immediate divorce, and your children will not have to go into a home because your husband can be made to support them. He is cruel and unlivable; it is not safe for either you or them to remain, and moreover, if you stay you might have more children, and each one of them would be a further weight around your neck to make you more and more helpless.

When we've made a mistake, Dora, the only thing to do is unmake it as far as possible, not persist in it. Pride is unworthy. What does it matter what people say? They no doubt talk anyway, and know that you are not happy. To keep on living this wretched life is only persisting in that first mistake. It is not because you married outside of your religion and race that you are unhappy, but because you married a man who would be the wrong man for any woman. But I do think that a common background helps, and Jewish men are usually a great success as husbands.

I cannot tell you how strongly I wish to urge this course upon you. Even if your children had to go into a home for a while, they would be better off than they are in a place where they are likely to see a murder committed before their eyes at any moment, or be murdered themselves. You know that, don't you? And you will have them out of the wreck, at any rate; something to work for and hope for, something to love. Even if your husband leaves the State and cannot be found to pay for their support, and they go into some good home for a while—there are many in this part of the country where it is not bad for a child to be, and I presume it is the same with you—you can go to work and get on your feet; learn some good trade or profession, and after a while have them with you again.

Don't you see how much safer and wiser all around that will be, dear girl, than staying with such a man and bearing him more children? Write again if I can help at all, or if there is any circumstance that changes things.

DEAR MRS. MORTON:

I have been reading the ALL-STORY magazine and am very much pleased with the answers you give others that are in trouble, so am going to try my luck.

I have been going with a fellow for three years and just worship the ground he walks on. He is lots older than I. He is thirty-three and I am nineteen. At first he cared an awful lot for me and asked me to marry him. I accepted, but now he is so different. He goes out with other girls and even tells me to go out with other fellows; then if I go out he gets mad and tells me he doesn't want to ever see me again. I go out with one other fellow in particular who is very nice to me and even talks of marriage, but I know I would never be happy with any one I don't love. Sometimes I want to go away somewhere and work, just do things for some one else and work so hard that maybe I could forget. If I could get in some kind of a home for babies—if you happen to know of a place let me know—as I just love babies and want to do things for them.

I hope you don't tell me this is just "puppy" love and will soon pass away, 'cause if any person could do the things that I have done for him and put up with what I have it sure couldn't be just puppy love. Now he talks about leaving town; if he does go where I can't even see him I think I will go crazy. What can I do to win him back? He sure cared something for me at one time or he wouldn't have asked me to marry him, and there must be one little spark of that love left. Will be waiting patiently for an answer.

ELSPETH.

This man sounds very selfish and inconsiderate, and no one like that is very comfortable to live with. It takes a lot of *kindness* first of all, Elspeth, to make a happy marriage, and this man sounds very rude and unkind.

Yes, I know that love can seem very deep and real at nineteen, and it is—for nineteen. But I believe, and wish you would try to believe with me, that the love that comes later is deeper and more real. You will be more mature in a few years, more worth loving and more capable of love. This love of

your girlhood is only a preparation for a better, finer, bigger feeling. That new love will be founded on trust, too, and you cannot trust this man—cannot trust him to be true to you, cannot trust him not to hurt you. A girl who persists in wasting her thoughts and affections on one who has shown so clearly that he does not want them, is only a fool for punishment.

Dear, yes, he cared—or imagined he did. But he tired. I don't know why. Maybe he is too selfish and shallow to keep on caring for anybody; maybe you made him too sure of you. It's too bad, but men don't want to be sure they can get a girl—they're much more likely to stay interested if she keeps them guessing. Anyway, you must accept the fact that he has cooled off, and has been rude and unkind to you. You must tell your heart what your brain knows now—that he's not worth worrying over. And no matter how hard it is at first, it isn't anything like as hard as it would be if you were his wife and saw him drifting away.

Take his advice. Go out with other fellows. Try to see possibilities of good and friendship in other people. Of course it is impossible for you to reason yourself out of love, but you can at least fill your mind and take up your time with other things until your heart recovers from its sickness.

It is a wonderful idea to go into an institution for babies, if you really care for them, but some one who is nearer can give you practical advice better than I can. Go to a minister, or some charitable association. Do you mean you'd like to be a trained child's nurse? Here in New York we have wonderful baby hospitals, and I have no doubt there are some near you, too. It would be a wonderful experience, a wonderful training; you'd be ready to earn your living at any time, all your life, if necessary, as well after marriage as before. And it would be the best way I can think of to fill in your time of waiting for the man who will be the right man, the good man, the true lover.

DEAR MRS. MORTON:

I'm writing to you for advice. Kindly tell me what to do. I'm a girl of nineteen, in love with a young man of twenty-eight. He never seems to take any notice of me. He came around once in a great while—in fact, he did come every day—but dropped off so suddenly. What should I do? Let him go (I don't think I could) or what's the best? In fact, I never care to go out with another unless I see him, and when I do he tells me he doesn't take other women out.

CONSTANT.

You are pretty young to be really in love, you know. You haven't met all the men in the world, nor even your own little corner of it, so how can you be sure that this man is really the one possible mate for you? Particularly when he treats you so cavalierly? No, Constant, I'd try to make friends in other people, both men and women. And get some hobby, too, to take up your mind.

When a girl says she is crazy about a man, she generally puts her finger right on the trouble. She is "crazy" about him, so she can't see clearly whether he is worthy or not; also, she gives herself away to him and makes him lose interest. Unfortunately, men don't want the girls they know they can get. Unfortunately, too, a girl in love loses her head and shows herself at a disadvantage to the one person she most wants to impress. If this man shows no further interest in you, you will have to make up your mind to forget him. And if he does wish to renew the acquaintance, and takes you out, or meets you accidentally somewhere, you must be cool and friendly only—show no resentment, but on the other hand, don't be too eager over him. The one way, Constant, to make

him want you in his arms is to give him a little wholesome doubt about whether you are ready to fall into them.

DEAR MRS. MORTON:

I believe that I have a very good message for "A Lonesome Seaman"; therefore I am writing to you with the hope that he may read this. I am a "Sailor's Sweetheart" so to speak, in words, but not in actions, for people seem to imagine that a sailor's sweetheart is "True to the Navy" rather than true to her man!

I am constantly encountering many different types of men and rarely have I found a civilian that I would consider a gentleman. I know sailors and seamen and many of them rate ace-high in my estimation. For they know how to respect a decent girl. I think that I am in a very good position to judge their characteristics. During the day I am a private secretary to a rather large firm, and at night I am employed as a hostess in a dance hall. Through my environment of the day position which I hold I am constantly encountering many types of "highly educated and supposedly very gentlemanly business men." You can readily see my opportunities are very great for accepting offers to dine, go to shows, etc., with these men. At first I accepted, but after the first few trials I gave up in disgust, for not a one of them did I find that could be a gentleman in the true sense of the word. Through my evening position I become acquainted with men who seem to be so lowly and yet when they are spoken to prove to be gentlemen. Especially seamen and sailors!

A Lonesome Seaman is entirely wrong in his view of any decent girl's attitude. Many a girl is lonesome and looking for friends and romance; then many things are to be taken in consideration. Along Riverside Drive occasionally I have seen sailors "pick up" girls. They will talk and many of them will eventually, before the evening is over, begin "necking." Whereas many of them also will merely sit all night talking; and as I have listened to more of these conversations than I dare to write I feel I should inform our Lonesome Seaman of quite a number of things.

He can just as readily as not become acquainted with a decent girl on a "pick-up." Many a girl is disconsolate and is seeking companionship even as he is, and therefore she just snatches at the chance of meeting some one she thinks she might care for and she would be proud to go with the fellow regardless of his rating. So because he might meet a girl without being formally introduced does not necessarily indicate that the girl is not decent and respectable. Perhaps if he would attend a public dance and then select one girl in particular whom he might care for after he had danced with her for a certain length of time, he might ask her permission to accompany her home and then to see her again. It is not needful for him to tell her that he does work in the Naval Department of U. S. A., not unless he sees that his intentions might prove to turn to a more serious thing than just companionship. Surely then if the young lady has any affection for him a little thing like that would not be considered an obstacle. Love excuses many things and Lonesome Seaman is in search of love. He will find it, too, I am sure, if he is earnest in his desire to do so.

Even in a taxi-dance-hall some of the nicest, finest, purest girls can be found. Rather a broad statement you might say—true, but nevertheless I am sincere when I say this. To-day unemployment is very large. Young girls stranded in New York who do not have folks here, what do they do? Anything so long as they have a weekly income coming to them. Dance-hall positions are almost always available to girls who might care to work at a sort of gamble. So all I can say is that because I am a hard-working girl for both a business firm and a dance hall I hope you do not feel prejudiced and will print this letter for Lonesome Seaman.

A warning to him also. Many of the girls whom he may chance to meet might be nothing but little "gold-diggers." If he cannot judge character very well I should hardly tell him to try either of my three suggestions. For he is taking a very big risk—yet the greater the risk the greater the gain!

Wishing him many friends and a sweetheart,
R. RED'S S.

Happy-Go-Lucky, Mass.—The way to be sure whether you love this boy is to wait and test it out. It does not sound to me as if you do, and if your people were only wise enough not to give the affair importance by fussing about it you would realize that yourself. The obstacles put in your way give it a glamour that is not its due. Wait awhile, have patience. Be really "happy-go-lucky" and not so serious. If you and he are meant for each other it will not hurt you to wait, whereas if you rushed into matrimony now you would probably ruin at least two lives.

Puzzled Lou, Missouri—There is no reason at all why you should give up your steady for the silly reason that he is a year or two younger than you. Those who have "shaken" you for such a silly reason as your going with him could never have been much to boast about as friends. Of course you are both too young to be thinking of getting married, but even if you were it is no concern of any one else, and the difference of a year or two in your ages need not enter into your consideration at all. You will find as you get older, Lou, that you meet criticism from ill-natured people no matter what you do. Such people are not worth standing in with, even if you could do it, and so long as you know that what you are doing is right I'd advise you to go ahead. Usually such backbiting as you describe is done only by those who envy you the opportunity they lack of having a good time.

Bewildered, Colorado—You sent me a stamped envelope, but no address whereby I can reach you. Your letter and the answer will appear in the next issue.

Bound by Fate—You are a young and lovely woman, free, with a good position. Your story,

in comparison with many that I hear, shines with happy circumstances. You could have plenty of friends if you would only be less lugubrious with them. No one wants to seek the company of a person who is always gloomy and depressing. You revel in your own unhappiness, but you must not expect others to enjoy being miserable with you. Some day if real trouble comes to you, instead of all these fancied wrongs and grievances that you make for yourself, you may look back and realize how you wasted your time, your opportunities, the gifts and boons that might have been yours if you had only taken the trouble to open your eyes and look at them. Anybody on earth could get himself or herself into just the state you are in by indulging the megrims—and three-quarters of the human race would have more excuse for doing so than you have. You remind me of a girl about whom a young man said, "She makes you feel she'd not accept an invitation to anything except a suicide pact." That's a cheerful effect to have on people, isn't it? I wish I could make you angry; it would be a relief to have you show any animation of any kind. Don't fool yourself. You are not bound by fate at all, but only by your own refusal to see the possibility of changing your attitude toward the world and its people. You have missed every cue life has ever offered you, but if you will only try to learn from experience maybe you can give the right answer to the next one.

For the coupon entitling you to John Fraser's services, turn to page 464

Reader's Choice Coupon

Help the editors select just the kind of story you like best by telling them which story in this issue appealed most to you.

This coupon and four others from previous or future issues will enable you to obtain free an original illustration in this issue. Just inclose five coupons in your letter and a drawing will be forwarded to you.

THE EDITORS,
ALL-STORY MAGAZINE,
280 Broadway, New York City.

Here is my opinion of the stories in this issue:

A Legacy of Hate.....

Sandra Gives Thanks.....

Midnight Madness.....

Cupid on the Gridiron.....

The Street of Closed Doors.....

An Offer of Marriage.....

His Great Love.....

Red Gingham Hearts.....

My favorite authors are .....

Name .....

Address .....

(Name and address may be omitted, if desired)

The Lonesome Club

Conducted by DOROTHEA DALE

MAKE friends! Join the Lonesome Club and soon you will be getting more letters than any one you know.

Here's how to do it: if you wish your letter published in these pages write to Mrs. Dale, care of ALL-STORY, *280 Broadway, New York City, and describe yourself. Try to make it as interesting as possible—tell little things about yourself that will make others want to write to you.*

If you wish to communicate with the pals whose letters appear here, inclose your letter in a plain, stamped envelope and send it to Mrs. Dale. No letters will be forwarded without the extra stamp.

If you are a girl, you may write to other girls; if a man, to other men.

Please do not ask Mrs. Dale for the address of any one.

DEAR MRS. DALE:

Just a lonesome Canadian girl, dying for letters. Twenty-one, light brown hair and blue eyes, five feet four. I love all outdoor sports and do a lot of horseback riding. Am I full of pep? I am! No matter what your age, nor where you are, pals, please write to

LONESOME TOOTS, B. C.

I am a girl of eighteen, five feet three, weigh 120. Tennis is the sport at the top of my list, though I enjoy most of the others, including hiking, golf, skating, riding and swimming. Art is my line, and I read much of the time. I have many friends and enjoy meeting new ones.

ARTIST OF MASS.

A lonely girl, five feet five, short dark hair and dark eyes. I like especially skiing, skating, swimming and basket ball, also dancing. I'm a fourth-former in high school, and don't mind school especially. We have a great time there. Here's hoping I get lots of letters from all over the U. S. and Canada.

LONELY BROWN EYES, Ontario.

A year ago I lost the greatest pal a fellow could have—"Mother." Since then I've just been lost. I wonder if the pals who read this wouldn't try with a few lines to help me feel as mother would want me to were she here. I'd appreciate them very much. I'm twenty-six, dark brown wavy hair, blue eyes, six feet, weigh 160. I've played night clubs and cabarets, can play the piano, and like all sports. Won't every one write, please?

To all mothers: How I would love to reach out and gather you all in my arms with a big hug, for, remember, letter pals, mother is our best friend, after all.

BUDDY OF INDIANA.

Young man of twenty-three, five feet tall, weigh 110, light-haired, a lover of swimming, track and basket ball, and a greater lover of books; would like to hear from others.

P. T. J. M.

I'm sixteen, gray-green eyes and light brown hair, love to read; would like to hear from girls of my own age in foreign countries. Can tell a few things about Hollywood.

"BUDDIE" OF CALIFORNIA.

A girl of twenty, auburn hair, gray eyes, considered good-looking. I like all sports, but my hobby is reading; I love the movies and dancing, play the piano and like to have a good time. Please keep the mailman busy, you pals.

BABE OF MISSOURI.

Twenty, brown hair and blue eyes, weigh 130, five feet eight inches tall. Would like to correspond with pals of my own age—will you let me enter?

JUST BABE OF LOUISIANA.

We'll state our case briefly, leaving our fate

Go gle

in the hands of your readers. Just as the lovers need the moonlight we're needing pen pals or what have you? We're two lonely congenial specimens of the fairer sex, both brunettes, the same height (five feet three), both fifteen, one of us a sophomore, the other a junior in high school. We like making new friends. Are you game? Please write to us and we'll do the rest.

DOTS AND DIXIE.

I am twenty and married, but very lonesome. A lover of all sports, brown hair and eyes, five feet seven, weigh 145. I'd like pen pals either married or single, so come on, all of you, write. I've plenty of paper and a pen.

EVELYN OF MARTINEZ.

Twenty-one, brown hair, blue eyes, fair complexion, five feet three. I love to read ALL-STORY and lots of things I can find interesting. I can write letters like nobody's business, will tell all I know about my State. Waiting!

NORMA OF TENNESSEE.

Hello, everybody! Three lonely little girls wishing with all our hearts for pen pals, all sixteen, all with brown hair and eyes. We are full of fun and are in love with sports. We are popular and, some say, good-looking, but to tell the truth we have never won any beauty contests and we aren't even thinking of trying to. We want everybody who can write to write us. We all chum around together.

PAT, JERRY AND BABE.

Honest-to-goodness, pals, won't you write to a fun-loving girl of fifteen with blue eyes and dark brown hair, five feet four, love all sports, crazy about dancing, too? I've just loads of pep and have loads to tell you. Try to inclose your photos.

CALIFORNIA BUNNY.

A girl of eighteen, five feet six, light brown hair and blue eyes, love dancing and all the sports you can mention. I also like flying, although I've never left the earth, but some day I hope to take a trip up. Come on, everybody, get your hands moving and write to lonesome

BOOTS OF HALIFAX.

I am thirteen, brown eyes and chestnut hair, fair complexion, in the first year of high. My favorite sports are dancing, joy-riding, swimming, horseback riding, tennis and miniature golf. I'm pretty good at tap dancing; I have danced and sung in some of the best theaters, and I have sung in the radio stations many times. I've been to New York, Chicago, California, and many parts of Mexico.

DANCING JOSIE OF MEXICO.

Won't you please write to me? How lonely I am! I love dancing, tennis, cricket, swimming. I'm sixteen and a half, five feet five, a young French student. I'll answer you in French, English and Italian. Would exchange snapshots.

A BASHFUL STUDENT, France. *(5c postage.)*

I admire your club. It's not that I am very lonely, but would appreciate very much to have letters from pen pals in America loving dancing, swimming, tennis; am a lover of movies. I've traveled much and know especially Spain, France, Italy. I am a French boy of nineteen, five feet eight, brown eyes. I'll answer you in English, French or Spanish, as you wish. On receipt of your photo I'll send mine. Don't lose this opportunity!

A FUTURE STAR, France.

I have a little boy of five and I work in a boarding house, so don't have much time except at night, when I get awfully lonesome. I am thirty-one, love housekeeping, camping, fishing and hunting. Come on, one and all, write, especially from Montana and Wyoming as I've lived there.

MRS. KATE.

I am five feet five, some call me dark, some light, so I must be between the two, hazel eyes and long face, not a bit good-looking, but that's not my fault. I love beauty, and also reading, dancing and good shows. I work in a boot and shoe factory, have three brothers and two sisters, also father and mother. Will soon be twenty-one. I love all boys, but am not going to marry. Now am I going to get some pals from far away?

SUSIE OF NEWFOUNDLAND.

Sixteen, brown hair, blue eyes, five feet two, would like to correspond with those of my own age. Hoping you let me in,

LYDIA, Louisiana.

Here we are, hoping every one will enjoy our letter as we have enjoyed theirs. We like to get letters and believe in answering them, too. We love everything that means good times. "Have a good ol' time while you're young" is our motto —how do you like it? We're twins, dark brown hair and blue eyes, between fourteen and seventeen. Take your choice and step on the gas!

GUNPOWDER AND DYNAMITE.

Eighteen, five feet one, almost black hair, brown eyes, creamy skin. Quite jolly, with a great sense of humor (and quite intelligent). Love all sports, movies, books and traveling—but, alas! I haven't done the last much. I'd like to hear from any part of the world, especially England.

MISS TONY, Philadelphia.

Twelve, brown eyes and hair, dark skin, have many friends, but want more. I'm full of music and love adventure; would enjoy hearing from New York, California, or Mass. Come on, pals from eleven to sixteen.

DOT OF VERMONT.

Fifteen, dark blond hair, blue eyes, fair complexion. Have lots of friends, but would like pen pals all over the world. I love all sports, especially dancing, skating and swimming. I will exchange snapshots.

ELMA FROM WAUKEGAN.

Another lass who wishes to claim a tiny corner of your club. I'm not lonesome, but would like a few pen pals. Brown-haired, gray-eyed, nineteen, born in the wilds of Canada, there-

fore a lover of sports and the great open spaces. Ranch life and the western and tropical regions attract me, so please write, all ye who have the privilege of such environment, and also any others who care to hear from

BEE OF MINNEAPOLIS.

I'd like to hear from any one who is full of pep. I'm twenty-five, five feet four, brown hair and blue eyes. Will have lots to write about as I'm on the go all the time. Love dancing, roller skating, and other sports.

MISS K. C. OF MAINE.

I sure enjoy ALL-STORY and, best of all, the Lonesome Club. One never realizes how many lonesome people there are in the world until one reads the requests of many asking for pals. I'm not lonesome, but my friends aren't the type I like. Perhaps through your club I can meet some one who isn't the wild type, who would care to correspond. I'm twenty-six, brunette, five feet six, enjoy almost everything and anything. Oh, yes, I'm a girl—really. ILLINOISAN.

Dear readers, would you want me for a pen pal? I hope so, and really think you will find my letters interesting. I'm eighteen, blue eyes and brown hair and fair complexion. I love all outdoor sports and also writing letters. I'm a real bookworm.

MINNESOTA SUNSHINE.

Just think, future pen pals, an opportunity of having a correspondent and friend in the southernmost city in the whole U. S. A.—isn't that tempting? I couldn't resist it. Appearances would say I'm about twenty—what do you think? A snap in return for yours. Yes, I'm a blond, light brown hair, light blue eyes, rather smooth complexion for a man, height five feet eleven, weigh 155, and if you promise not to think me conceited, I've been told I'm good-looking. Although I part my hair in the middle, I am not a twentieth century sheik, but can be one if you prefer, so just write the kind of letter you would like to receive and I'll do my best to please.

VICTOR OF FLORIDA.

I like to write more than anything—can you *squeeze* me in? I am nineteen, five feet three, blond curly hair, considered good-looking, like to dance and read and get letters. I have traveled in Georgia, South Carolina, Florida, and spent last winter in New Orleans and can tell you all about the famous Mardi Gras. Would especially like to hear from some in or from Hawaii or the South Seas. I'm of the male species.

JIMMIE STARR.

My pal got married. Of course I'll never forgive her for it, but that won't help me out any, but one of the many readers of ALL-STORY can, and I'm expecting you to. Come on, I am waiting and in a hurry—nineteen years old.

MISS IMA YANKEE.

We are just two young boys that work in a café together and we get lonesome sometimes and we would like to have some letters from other lonely people. Ed is blond and slim, six foot even, considered rather good-looking. He can dance, swim and play tennis, but he favors golf and horseback riding. LoLo is not as slim as Ed and not as tall, but he also likes to swim and dance, but most of all he likes to write letters and go to the movies. Please some one write to a couple of lonesome fellows who work together. ED AND LOLO OF OKLAHOMA.

I have been a regular reader of ALL-STORY for some time. Please help me out; I am a young man of twenty-one, dark hair, brown eyes. I have done lots of travel—it has been one month since I came back from Hawaii, and I have been all over the island.

FORT JAY SOLDIER.

I would like to have a pen pal in every country in the world. Will I ever have my wish? If you wonder who I am and how I look, just write and I'll tell you. PEGGY LOU, Ohio.

I am seventeen, and love all sports—golf, basket ball, tennis and others, but ice skating is my meat. I am an acrobat dancer and can do some pretty nifty stunts. I am a senior in high school. I would love to receive loads of letters from everywhere, especially the West. I have light brown hair, golden brown eyes, weigh 120, five feet five. Please, Mrs. Dale, find me some pen pals—I think your club is the canary's eyebrows. Toodle-oo and thanks. LONELY FLAME.

Hello, everybody! Here I am, a blonde with blue eyes, five feet two. I am going to the college out here; I'm full of life and love every sport, especially swimming, canoeing and skiing. I am eighteen, and like to receive a lot of letters and have a lot of friends. Won't any of you write to me? I can write both in French and English. Come on, let us know each other. Have also a little bit of love experience, which I can talk about; it will interest you, I am sure! You won't be blue with me, don't worry about that. Just waiting for friends from all around the world, and I promise to go and see you some day, too. One who is always having a good time.

SMILING MARRIEL.

Am a lonesome married woman, five feet five, weigh 151, medium brown hair and brown eyes. My husband is gone all day, leaving me with nothing to do but write, so come on, everybody. I'll answer every one and can tell some interesting things about different parts of the country where we have lived as we are moving about quite often. BROWN EYES OF SONOMA.

I've been a regular reader of ALL-STORY for some time. I'm twenty, a brunette, weigh 116, and am five feet two. I'm fond of all kinds of sports, especially reading. I work at home and get lonesome at times, so would like to have pen pals from all over—anywhere suits me. Will also exchange snapshots.

BROWN-EYED ANN.

I am a boy, nineteen, have graduated from high, have black wavy hair and am good-looking.

I love all sports, but best of all yachting and the water. I like blondes and brunettes both, so give me a ring. I know a good deal about caves.

DAL.

Being of the superior and somewhat scornful sex, I have always looked upon Lonesome Club and columns of that nature with a somewhat disdainful and amusing attitude. For I have always thought that these clubs have but one object in bringing together people—matrimony. But, since I have been reading your column, Mrs. Dale, my attitude has changed and I realize that there are a few people who would really cherish a true pal, so I hereby hand you my application to your club with the hopes of registering approval among pen pals. I am twenty-one, five feet ten, weigh 148. My appearance—what does it matter? However, I will exchange snapshots if it is of vital importance. My likes—girls who are athletically inclined with a reasonable amount of brains. My aversions—brainless flappers who are out only for a good time, or girls who are continually hinting marriage.

A SKEPTIC.

I wondered if I could please join your club. I am a lonesome boy of sixteen, five feet seven, brown eyes and light brown hair, and am wishing for some pals from sixteen to twenty-four.

RICHARD OF ILLINOIS.

I am indeed lonely, seventeen, blue eyes, light brown hair, five feet four, and am considered "cute," although I am not bow-legged. I have a special "dream train" and I wish to relate to all who read this that I am gladly admitting passengers from sixteen to twenty-five. Remember, pals, this excursion is at a very low rate—only two cents.

UKULELE ANN.

I am nineteen, have dark brown hair, curly, a funny nose, a wide mouth and one dimple. Oh, yes, I'm five feet five, and slim. Considered good-natured. Won't some one please write to me? I am known as

MERRY SUNSHINE.

I know it is unusual for one fifty-one years old to request pen pals, but I live in a strange place, bach, and naturally get pretty lonesome. I was always used to having a good time, like lots of friends, like to go to the movies, dance, swim, go to a ball game, travel, collect photos and above all I love music. Most people my age like to lie around the house, perfectly content to read, listen to the radio, or frown upon the young generation, forgetting they were ever young. I never want to get old. I love young people, sympathize with them and enjoy their pleasure with them. I have a boy sixteen years old and we are pals. He, no doubt, will help me answer the letters if I receive too many. Now, come on, everybody, lean, fat, tall, short, old and young. I will do my best to write something of interest to every one. As my hair is gray, will sign myself

THE WHITE OWL.

I am a young married woman, twenty-four years of age. In the two years of my married life I have found real happiness. I have a devoted husband and we are real pals, go everywhere together and share alike our mutual joys and sorrows. I am greatly interested in human nature and always willing and anxious to help cheer those about me who are sad or unhappy, or less fortunate than myself. I have made this my motto and strive to live up to it—"Try to do some good each day and have a pleasant smile for every one." Practicing this has brought me many true-blue friends, so I suggest that others try it and see if the same results will not be attained. I shall be glad to hear from any one who would care to correspond with

CHEERFUL CHERUB.

I am writing this to you to let you know that I am a reader of ALL-STORY and I think the book has the most wonderful stories in it I have ever read. I love to read them, they are so thrilling, and I have my girl friends now reading them; they can hardly wait for each issue. They sure keep me company when lying sick in the hospital. I have been there four times in three months, so don't do anything but read and write a few letters. I think it is the most wonderful magazine published in the U. S. Well, you have heard my praise and I hope every one likes to read ALL-STORY as well as my friends and I.

YOUR FAITHFUL OHIO READER.

Think you can find some pals for a nice little girl about five feet three, 108 pounds, blue eyes, auburn hair, guess I'd pass in looks in a crowd with a little push? I work evenings sometimes and have plenty of time on my hands, and would like to see plenty of letters coming in. Whoopee of Texas is just my type.

BUNNY OF NEW JERSEY.

I'm a girl of fourteen, but look older, have brown hair and eyes, love all sports, especially swimming and skating, and I love to write.

SMILES OF HAMILTON.

I must do the customary thing and describe myself—I'm seventeen, five feet nine, weigh 145. I have finished Crane Jr. College in Chicago. I made the track team there and in high school I made the track and boxing teams. I'm a good swimmer and tennis player. Please find me a pen pal near my age. I'm new here where I am and don't know anybody.

FREDDIE OF INDIANA.

I've been reading the stories in ALL-STORY for a long time and sure do love them. I want a pen pal somewhere out West, one with black hair and brown eyes. I hail from the picturesque and historic mountains of Tennessee. I am seventeen and have never been kissed—honestly. I'm hard to please. Lots of people think I am a beautiful girl. They call me

JEWEL.

Absolutely refuse what most girls call pleasure—dance halls and so on. Have time only for work and books, books, books.

I reckon the Lonesome Club is a great idea, especially for us Australians, to get in touch with overseas pals. I'm just dying to correspond with girls my own age in America. I'm a "dinky-

dee" Australian, sixteen, neither beautiful nor ugly, one of those happy-go-lucky girls termed attractive. Dark brown shingled hair with a kink in it, large black eyes, clear olive skin, rosy cheeks that stand washing and a perpetual Australian grin. Wait a sec! I'm five feet two and weigh 110. I'm a worshiper of outdoor sport, can play hockey, tennis, basket ball, cricket, and in the summer the beach claims me. We live right on the edge of the Pacific Ocean and I love surfing better than anything else on earth. I can swim all strokes at a good speed, dive and shoot the breakers. I love motoring, fishing, yachting and rowing. I have a typewriter of my own and can even make the old piano rattle. I'm also a great reader of all types of books. Another thing I like is walking home from parties after you have missed the last train, but of course every one likes that. I'm a terrible chatterbox, and hope I receive heaps of answers.

BERYL. *(5c postage)*

I am twenty-seven, five feet nine, weigh 135, dark wavy hair and dark brown eyes, not handsome, but a darn good sport. I'm very broad-minded, sometimes to a fault.

KEN FROM MASS.

Hello, everybody! Here's a seventeen-year-old dying to show you she's the Lord's gifts to correspondents. I want lots from sixteen to one hundred. I'm in upper school in the local collegiate. Appearance? It's deceiving. Five feet two; my beautiful face would pass only in the dark, hazel eyes, freckles, turned-up nose and brown hair in boyish bob. I'm also what's termed "pleasingly plump." I want all sorts of correspondents from everywhere—I can write French fairly well, and can read it well, so if any Frenchies write 'twill be first rate. Y'see, I want to get practice in that language. I'm interested in everything, 'specially the reading of nice (?) murder stories.

CANADIAN FRECKLES.

I'm a telegraph operator, blond, blue eyes, five feet two. I'm interested in anything and everything and want to hear from every one—don't mind the postage, gang. I can stand it if you can. Do I get those letters? TERRY.

I am twenty-five years old, a girl with dark brown hair and blue eyes, five feet five, weigh 106. I have quite a lot of girl friends at the Y. W. C. A., but some of them are mean—they make fun of me. I do not want anybody to make fun of me. I was born with a cleft palate and it made it rather hard for me to speak, so when I was eighteen I had it sewed up. The operation came out successful. It pleased my mother and father and made me happy because I could say my words better. I am the only child, so I am kinda lonely when I don't go to the Y. I have lots of aunts and uncles and cousins, but they are all out of the city. I'm not good-looking. I dress very neatly, like all kinds of sports, and also traveling. During the winter I help my father with the lists in his laundry. Please let me have some of the Lonesome Club write to me as sometimes I get so lonely I don't know what to do with myself. Don't forget

MARGARET OF THE BRONX.

Not very far from Green Bay, the home of the world-famous "Packers" football team, away up in northeastern Wisconsin am I, lonesome for all of you who like to write letters. I'm almost nineteen, tall, blond, very, very fond of baseball, basket ball—oh, anything in the athletic line; also dancing, swimming and just everything that young folks delight in. Will exchange snapshots without embarrassment, for I am not bad-looking. Hoping to see the mails crowded,

PEARL OF WISCONSIN.

We are two young English fellows, working in London right on the banks of the Thames. One of us is five feet nine, dark hair and eyes; the other is taller with dark hair and blue eyes. We both want a lot of pen pals in America; we are interested in everything that makes life worth living, and both have a sense of humor, although they are very different. Have you any Irish readers? If so, God bless them!

PAT AND HARRY OF LONDON. *(Postage 2c)*

I am just a little country mouse surrounded by South Africa's great open spaces. Will some kind city sparrow please write to me and offer me a bright spot whereinto my thoughts may creep. I am aching for some pen pals. My eyes are brown; I have auburn hair, and I am fond of music, reading and driving. I haven't a fiery temper, really, friends-to-be! My husband, who is rather a dear, does not think I have, so it must be true, must it not? We have a dear little girl of three. Do write and help me to wipe away the cobwebs. By the way, I am twenty-five—am I too old to expect replies? I'd like to exchange snaps. Here's luck to ALL-STORY, and may my letter appeal to lots and lots of readers.

COUNTRY MOUSE, *South Africa. (Postage 5c)*

GIRLS AND BOYS! Please try to give me your correct names and addresses. *Jackie of Elizabeth, Barbara of New York, Babe of Iowa,* who wrote Eddie—who are you?

Dear Girls and Boys:

If you do not get answers to your letters, why not write to some of the others first, yourself? Also, if those who reply do not hear from the pals they picked out, try, try again. There is some congenial pal for everybody, if we can only locate him or her. And let me urge you all again, as I have before, to be sure to sign your own full name and address to your letters. They will not be printed, but you cannot receive any notice unless you do so.

DOROTHEA DALE.

You whose children have food this Yuletide

Give unto those who are *starving*

Scent of holly in the air . . . . a gay tree brimming with holiday blessings . . . . perfume from the kitchen where a generous Christmas dinner is being readied by you and yours . . . . and a mother, her happy, healthy children in her arms, looking out upon the serene night, in which celestial candles gleam and glitter. Home . . . . sanctuary . . . . gifts . . . . food . . . . protection.

During good times or bad, the average American home manages to approach the Yuletide season with joyous anticipation. And the sympathetic urge to help those who are less fortunate, is, always, a national characteristic.

But today . . . . the need for "having a heart" is more tragic, more urgent, more terrifyingly necessary, than ever in the world's history. American children and children of many nations, are STARVING. As the facts accumulate, this situation might well cause us to shudder with horror . . . . "Starving Children" . . . . not a pleasant thought!

What a beautiful thing it will be for YOU, this Yuletide, to give, if but modestly, to these tiny sufferers to whom even a crust of dry bread will come as a blessing. "GOLDEN RULE WEEK" is a constructive opportunity in this direction. The long arm of its vast charity reaches out and finds these hungry youngsters . . . . feeds them. You will do YOUR share, we know

"Whatsoever Ye would that others should do unto You do Ye even so unto Them - - - - -

"GOLDEN RULE WEEK"

December 7-14

The donor may designate his gift for any philanthropy in which he is especially interested and one hundred cents of every dollar will go as designated—none for expenses.
Undesignated gifts will be allocated by the Survey Committee after careful investigation to meet the most acute needs through the most efficient agencies.

THE GOLDEN RULE FOUNDATION,
Lincoln Building, 60 E. 42 St.,
New York, N. Y.

Enclosed find $. . . . . to be used in meeting the needs of suffering humanity.

NAME . . . . . .

ADDRESS . . . . . .

Designated for . . . . . .

December 7-14

THIS SPACE IS CONTRIBUTED BY
THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, Publishers of this Magazine